

Appendix E

A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY OF POSTMENOPAUSAL EXPERIENCES AND SELF-CARE ACTIONS OF KELANTANESE WOMEN IN MALAYSIA. *Hardip Kaur Dhillon, Nik Mohamed Zaki Nik Mahmood. Dept of Obs & Gyn, Sch Med Sciences, USM, 16150 Kubang Kerian, Kelantan, Malaysia.*

Menopause is associated with numerous transient typical and atypical symptoms. It is believed that Asian women suffer more of the atypical symptoms and fewer, and with lesser severity, the typical psychological and vasomotor symptoms than the western women. This study reports the incidence and nature of menopausal symptoms in Kelantanese women and the self-care action taken by them.

88867 1545d A semi-structured self administered questionnaire was administered to 326 postmenopausal women (aged, 57.01 ± 6.58 (SD) years) residing in the state of Kelantan. The subjects comprised of naturally menopausal, healthy women. Women with diabetes and hypertension were not included. Descriptive statistical analysis was performed on the data using SPSS.

Mean age at menopause was 49.4 ± 3.4 (SD) years while both the mode and median were 50 years. The mode for the number of symptoms complained by each woman was 8 (range 0 – 16). The incidence of atypical symptoms was; tiredness (79.1%), reduced concentration (77.5%), musculo-skeletal aches (70.6%) and backache (67.7%). Night sweats (53%), headaches (49.4%) and hot flushes (44.7%) were the typical vasomotor symptoms, whereas mood swings (51%), sleep problems (45.1%), loneliness (41.1%), anxiety (39.8%), and crying spells (33.4%) were the main psychological symptoms. Urogenital symptoms such as occasional stress incontinence (38.3%), weak bladder control (21.2%) and occasional urinary tract infection (19%) was also reported. Urogenital aging can affect sexual functioning particularly changes in sexual desire and onset of dyspareunia.

Majority women reported a reduced amount of vaginal secretion (50.9%). The commonest coital frequency was approximately 2 – 4 times per month (49.7%). On the whole 42.3% observed a decrease in the frequency of sexual activity post menopaually. Nearly 69% of the women reported to either have a reduced (39%) or no (29.6%) sexual desire or interest. A similar pattern was seen in the libido. Various degree of dyspareunia was reported by 34%. Some women (23.3%) had noticed that their spouses' sexual interest in them had reduced compared to before menopause. Majority (61%) spent almost all their time with their spouses. A high proportion (66.2%) had been married for more than 26 years and had a positive relationship with their spouses. A small fraction (7.1%) found their vagina was not able to accommodate completely an erected penis. Again a small fraction (2.1%) admitted to having sexual problem which had an affect on their marital relationship. Another (9.5%) spouses had sexual problem which possibly also affected the marital relationship. A quarter of the women thought their sexuality could be improved while another quarter thought otherwise. More than half (52.6%) did not take any action to improve their sexuality. Those who did, took HRT, Jamu, Evening Primrose Oil, Royal jelly, did regular exercises and controlled their diet.

The percentage of women taking self-care action depended upon the symptom, and ranged from 47.7% for the reduced concentration to 100% for crying spells and

anxiety. Their self-care actions included taking traditional medicine, alternative medicine, prescribed medication, being actively involved in community work, and having peer support and the choice was influenced by cultural, religious, educational and socio-economic factors. More the half (55%) did not seek any advice regarding their menopause. Those who did, mainly approached their friends. Only 13% of women were not aware of the phenomena when menopause occurred. The source of gaining knowledge on menopause was by talking to friends, health professionals, and attending seminars.

In conclusion, it appears that the menopausal symptoms experienced by women in Kelantan are somewhat similar to those experienced by women elsewhere, albeit, with differing frequencies. Majority of the women accepted menopause as the beginning of the aging process and resorted to numerous self-care actions to help see them through this transition.

Words 605

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