

## ABSTRACT

This community based descriptive cross sectional study was carried out with the objective of describing the symptoms experienced by menopausal women and the practices adopted for the symptoms and to determine the factors associated with such practices in the Dehiwala Medical Officer of Health area. A study sample of 600 women who had at least 3 months of absence of menstruation, in the age group of 45-56 years, who were residing in the study area at least for the past 3 months were selected. A multistage cluster sampling method was conducted to select study units for this study.

Symptoms experienced and practices adopted for those symptoms in the past 4 weeks prior to the date of data collection were recalled by using an interviewer-administered questionnaire. The symptoms were introduced as a list of eight symptoms of menopause and practices as five different types of treatment. The symptom was considered to be present in a woman if she experienced one of the symptoms during the recall period.

The overall prevalence of experiencing one or more of the selected symptoms was 44.5%. However the experience of symptoms ever was 58.2%. Out of the eight symptoms five were predominately prevalent among the peri menopausal women and only three symptoms were more prevalent among postmenopausal women. Symptoms were more prevalent among women in younger age group with low educational qualifications and with poor knowledge on menopause. Majority of

symptoms were perceived either as not troublesome or troublesome to some extent.

Majority of women (28.1%) had adopted home remedy only, for those symptoms experienced while a considerable proportion (24.7%) had taken indigenous treatment. Western treatment only (15.7%) was taken up as next. Practices had differed with socio-demographic factors. Practicing any form of therapy had decreased with advancing age. Seeking Western treatment was more with higher educational levels, with good knowledge on menopause, higher employment levels, and among higher income groups.

Use of HRT in the study sample was low (9%). HRT use too, had differed with socio-demographic factors and with knowledge on menopause. Use was high among the younger age group, with high educational level, and among higher employment status, with higher income groups and with good knowledge on menopause.

This study revealed that knowledge on menopause, a factor which could be changed by health education, increases experiences of symptoms and the treatment seeking behavior. Therefore it is recommended that health education programmes directed at menopausal women should be conducted.