

Original Research Article

## **Awareness of Menopause among Women Attending at Gynae Out Patient Department in Kathmandu University Hospital, Nepal**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Introduction:** Menopause is a universal phenomenon. However, it has some psychological and biological changes that effect in women's health. The aim of the study is to assess awareness of menopause among women who are attending in Gynae Outpatient Department (OPD) in Kathmandu University Hospital, Dhulikhel, Nepal

**Methodology:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was used. Data were collected in the Gyane OPD with simple random sampling technique. Total 128 numbers of women were included in the study whose ages were between 40-60 years. A structured questionnaire was used which included questions for assessing awareness about menopause. After collecting data it was entered in SPSS program and analysis was performed with descriptive as well as inferential statistics.

**Result:** Based on the result, 63.3% of the women had good awareness related to sign and symptoms, complication from menopause and its preventive measures. There were no statistically significant associations of the age of respondents, occupation, economical status, menopausal status and gravida with awareness levels of menopause.

**Conclusion:** Nearly two thirds of respondents had good awareness related to menopause. There was statistically significant association of educational status with awareness levels of menopause.

**Key words:** awareness, menopause, women.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Menopause is defined as the state of an absence of menstrual periods for 12 months. The menopausal transition starts with varying menstrual cycle length and ends with the final menstrual period. The majority of women pass about one third of their lives in the menopause period. Menopause is the end of fertility period and occurs within the age of 40 to 60 years. The average age of menopause onset is 51 years old, but menopause may occur as early as the 30s or as late as the 60s. <sup>[1]</sup>

A study at Bangalore, India; fatigue, lack of energy, tiredness (72.93%), headache (55.9%), hot flushes, cold sweats,

cold hand and feet (53.86%) and weight gain (43.13%) were most frequent complained menopausal symptoms. Only 34% of the study populations were aware of the symptoms because of menopause. <sup>[2]</sup>

The life expectancy rate is slowly increasing all over the world. Nepal's Life expectancy has also increased. The average life span for females is 67 years in Nepal. With the increase in life span, old age related problems are increasing as well. One of the most common problems that women face very often in old age is menopause. Many women are not aware of this condition. They sit in their home; they get depressed by minor trivial issues like

household chores and relationships; they blame the old age and they silently wait for a miracle to cure their ailing age problem. Menopause is a condition that women experience usually during the age of 46-51 years. [3]

Women's awareness of menopause varies based on multiple factors; as to their age; the number of births; social, economic, cultural, and education status; and geographical factors. Most of women reach menopause age without having adequate knowledge about the events of this period and the ways to deal with the phenomenon. In the societies where women have high information about menopause, the consequences of the phenomenon are less noticeable. When women are knowledgeable in the symptoms and complications of menopause, they are able to tolerate its complications in a better manner and prevent occurrence of its serious and irreversible consequences through appropriate treatments. [4]

Although menopause is not an illness; there are too many disease related to it which causes mortality in menopausal women. The effects of this physiological phenomenon include vaginal changes (dryness and thinning of the mucus, dyspareunia, and an increase the chance of vaginal infection), bones' thinning (decrease in length and density of the bones and osteoporosis), behavioral changes (perspiration, irritable, depression, and low concentration), urinary changes (feeling pain or soreness during urination, urine leakage with cough, sneeze, and laugh), increase of body fat content around the waist (weight increase), and low desire for sexual activity.

The aim of this study is to assess awareness of menopause among the women who are attending in Gynae OPD in Kathmandu University Hospital and to find out the association between selected sociodemographic variable (age, educational status, economical status, occupation, grvida) and level of awareness of menopause.

## METHODOLOGY

A cross sectional simple descriptive research was completed. Data was collected among women whose ages were 40 to 60 years old and who were attending Gynae OPD in the hospital. Simple random sampling was used for the study. For this sampling, every day alternate respondents were taken for the study. Structure questionnaire was developed for data collection as per literature. Questionnaires were divided in two parts. First part is demographic data and second is awareness on menopause related symptoms, complication of menopause and preventive measures. Total 128 women were included for the study. Data was collected from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014 within 3 months. Before data collection verbal consent was taken from each respondent. After data collection each correct response regarding menopause was given 1 mark and incorrect response was given 0 marks. Then the total score was calculated and indentified the level of awareness. In this study the total awareness score were categorized in three levels based on the study done in Iran. [4]

**Low level awareness (Knowledge):** if the total score is less than 25 percentages

**Average level of awareness (Knowledge):** if the total score is 25 -50 percentage

**Good level of awareness (Knowledge):** if the total score is more than 50 percentages

**Data was analyzed by using descriptive statistical method like:** mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage and inferential statistics like chi -square test. Chi -square test was used to identify association between socio-demographic variable and awareness level of menopause.

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY

As shown in above table out of total 128 respondents, 48.4% of respondents belong to the 45 to 55 age group and 10.9% belong to the more than 55 age group. Similarly in educational status 28.9% of the respondent are illiterate and remaining are literate in different educational level.

Likewise considering economical status by their verbalization, 79.7% responded told that their economical status is satisfactory whereas 7.8% respondents were of poor economical status. Majority i.e. 60.9% of

respondents had more than two children. As menopausal status 34.4% of respondents had menopause.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Information of the Respondents n=128**

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age in years	less than 45	52	40.6
	45-55 years	62	48.4
	more than 55	14	10.9
Residence	VDC	69	53.9
	Municipality	59	46.1
Education Level	illiterate	37	28.9
	informal education	55	43.0
	primary level	19	14.8
	Above primary	17	13.2
Economic Status	Satisfactory	102	79.7
	Saving(Sufficient)	16	12.5
	Weak (poor)	10	7.8
Status of menopause	Yes	44	34.4
	No	84	65.6
			n=125
Number of Children	Up to two children	47	37.6
	More than Two	78	62.4

**Table 2: Awareness of respondents regarding Sign and Symptoms of Menopause n=128**

S.N	Symptoms of menopause	Correct (%)	Incorrect (%)	I don't know (%)
1	Menopause is a natural phenomenon	108(84.4)	1(0.8)	19(14.8)
2	Irregular menstruation is the sign of beginning of the menopause period	100(78.1)	3(2.3)	25(19.5)
3	The average age of menopause period is 45 to 55 years	109(85.2)	4(3.1)	15(11.7)
4	The most common symptom of menopause is hot flush	57(44.5)	8(6.2)	63(49.2)
5	The most common symptoms of menopause is night sweat	51(39.0)	10(7.8)	67(52.3)
6	Menopause women have sleep disorders	58(45.3)	12(9.4)	58(45.3)
7	Menopause women have headache	61(47.7)	7(5.5)	60(46.9)
8	Menopause women may have mood changes/swings	67(52.3)	7(5.5)	54(42.2)
9	Smoking women are inclined to be menopause sooner	37(28.9)	8(6.2)	83(64.8)
10	Menopause women have changes in sexual desire	50(39.1)	8(6.2)	70(54.7)
11	Intercourse in menopause women is with pain	48(37.5)	4(3.1)	76(59.4)
12	Menopause women are more risk to have sore and frequency of urination	61(47.7)	9(7)	58(45.3)

(Note: figures in brackets indicate percentage)

**Table 3: Awareness regarding Complication of Menopause n=128**

S.N.	Complication of menopause	Correct	Incorrect	I don't know
1	The bones are fragile and porous during the menopause period	68(53.1)	2(1.6)	58(45.3)
2	Heart diseases are more common during menopause period	36(28.1)	6(4.7)	86(67)
3	Diabetes is more common during menopause period	16(12.5)	15(11.7)	97(75.8)
4	Breast cancer is higher risk after menopause	35(27.3)	7(5.5)	85(66.4)
5	Tuberculosis is higher risk after menopause	17(13.3)	12(9.4)	99(77.3)
6	Asthma is higher risk after menopause.	15(11.7)	16(12.5)	97(75.8)
7	Urinary incontinence is risk during menopause	45(35.2)	9(7.0)	74(57.8)
8	Overweight/obesity is common during the menopause	65(50.8)	11(8.6)	65(50.8)

(Note: figure in bracket indicate percentage)

Table 2 shows awareness of respondents regarding sign and symptoms of menopause. Majority 84.4% responded that menopause is natural process. Correct response on the statement irregular menstruation is the sign of beginning of the menopause period is 78.1%. Lowest score of correct response is 28.9% that smoking

women are inclined to be menopause sooner.

Table 3 shows awareness regarding complication of menopause. Regarding complication of menopause highest 53.1% correct response about the knowledge that bones are fragile and porous during the menopause period and lowest 11.7% correct response about the knowledge that asthma is

higher risk after menopause which is negative response.

**Table: 4 Preventive Measures to Reduce the Complication of Menopause? n=128**

S.N.	The Preventive measures to prevent complications of menopausal	Correct	Incorrect	I don't know
<b>A.</b>				
<b>For reducing hot flush:</b>				
1	Avoid eating hot and spicy meals	105(80.5)	7(5.5)	18(14.1)
2	Avoid hot and crowded places	115(89.8)	1(0.8)	12(9.4)
3	Giving up smoking	19(14.8)	2(1.6)	19(14.8)
4		64(50)	40(31.2)	24(18.8)
5	Coffee could drink more frequently	39(30.5)	38(29.7)	51(39.8)
6	Having deep breathes during hot flushes	9(7.0)	85(66.4)	34(26.6)
<b>B.</b>				
<b>Reducing the other complications</b>				
1	Drinking one glass of milk or yogurt before going to bed (to have a sound sleep)	86(67.2)	12(9.4)	30(23.4)
2	Adequate sleep and daily activities (for elimination of fatigue and irritability)	104(81.2)	4(3.1)	20(15.6)
3	Study and mediation (improving the memory)	84(65.6)	6(4.7)	38(29.7)
4	Applying lubricating creams during intercourse (to reduce dyspareunia)	64(50.0)	8(6.2)	56(43.8)
5	Consuming milk, yogurt, and cheese (for bones health)	109(85.2)	4(3.1)	15(11.7)
6	Regular exercising (for bones health)	99(77.3)	3(2.3)	26(20.3)
7	Taking calcium tablet or syrup (for bones health)	80(62.5)	9(7.0)	39(30.5)
8	Quit smoking ( if smoking) and keeping a suitable weight (to decrease heart disease rate)	97(75.8)	97(75.8)	26(20.3)

Above table shows the awareness regarding preventive measure to reduce the complication of menopause. Majority 115 (89.8%) of respondents have correct responses on the knowledge that to reduce the hot flush avoid hot and crowded places whereas only 19 (14.8%) had correct knowledge on Giving up smoking to reduce the hot flush. Likewise majority 104 (81.2%) had correct knowledge on adequate sleep and daily activities to reduce other complication (for elimination of fatigue and irritability) and only 64 (50.0%) had correct knowledge on applying lubricating creams during intercourse (to reduce dyspareunia).

**Table 5: Overall Awareness (Knowledge) Level regarding Menopause n=128**

Level of awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Poor awareness	10	7.8
Average awareness	37	28.9
Good awareness	81	63.3

From the above table 5, majority 81 (63.3%) respondents had good awareness and 37 (28.9%) had average while only 10 (7.8%) respondent had poor awareness regarding menopause. The average and good knowledge are considered as good awareness level for checking the association between socio demographic and awareness level.

**Table: 6 Associations between Socio demographic Variables and Awareness Level on Menopause n=128**

Socio-demographic variable	Good knowledge	Poor Knowledge	Total	p_ Value
<b>Age</b>				
40 to 50 years	63(62.4)	38(37.6)	101(100)	0.681
50 to 60 years	18(66.7)	9(33.3)	27(100)	
<b>Education Status</b>				
Illiterate	29(78.4)	8(21.6)	37(100)	0.024
Literate	52(57.1)	39(42.9)	91(100)	
<b>Occupation</b>				
Housewife	38(69.1)	17(30.9)	35(100)	0.449
Agriculture	28(57.1)	21(42.9)	49(100)	
Other	15(62.5)	9(37.5)	24(100)	
<b>Economical Status</b>				
Satisfactory and Saving	72(61)	46(39)	118(100)	0.068
poor	9(90)	1(10)	10(100)	
<b>Menopause status</b>				
Yes	30(68.2)	14(31.8)		0.405
No	51(60.7)	33(39.3)		
<b>Gravida</b>				
Nully and Primi gravida	5(45.5)	6(54.5)	11(100)	0.200
Multi gravida	76(65.0)	41(35.0)	117(100)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>81(63.5)</b>	<b>33(39.3)</b>	<b>128(100)</b>	

Table 6 shows the association between selected socio-demographic variable and level of awareness on menopause. There is no significant association between age of respondents, their occupation, economical status, menopausal status and gravida with level of awareness regarding menopause. Regarding the education, 29 (78.4%) out of 37 illiterate respondents had good awareness whereas 52 (57.1%) out of 91 literate respondents had good awareness regarding menopause which was found to have significant association where calculated p value is 0.024 (<0.05).

## DISCUSSION

Based on the result of the present study, majority 63.3% women had good overall awareness level, 28.9% had average awareness and only 7.8% had poor awareness level (knowledge) about menopause related to sign and symptoms, complication and preventive measures. In this finding awareness level is higher than in the study done by Bakouei F, Basiral Z, Salmalian H, Omidvar S, Bakouei S, in which result revealed that 44.1% had good awareness, 30.9% had average awareness and 25% of them low awareness of complication and symptoms of menopause. Similarly 45.9% of women had good awareness while 26.8% had average and 27.3% had low awareness of method used for prevention of menopausal complication. [4] In another study conducted in Tehran, it was found that 53% of women had information about menopause.

In this study majority 85.2% of the women had correctly responded when they are asked about the average age of menopause period for which the correct answer is 45 to 55 years. Similarly 84.4% of respondents had correctly responded to the statement "menopause is a natural phenomenon". Relating to the knowledge on common symptoms of menopause 44.5% of respondents answered correctly as hot flush, 39% in night sweating, and 47.7% on headache as common symptoms and so on. The lowest knowledge is, only 28.9% of

respondents had correctly responded that smoking women are inclined to be risk of menopause early. In research conducted in Iran, majority 78.6% correctly responded that menopause is a natural phenomenon and 71.8% that irregular menstruation is a sign of beginning of menopause period. In that research also the lowest ie15.9% responded correctly that the Menopause women are more inclined to have sore and frequency of urination and 22.7% that intercourse in menopause women is with pain on menopause. [4] Similarly study done in Pakistan showed that about 43.4% knew that what is menopause, while 58% were aware of the average age of menopause in their country. Although majority of women thought that tiredness was the most common immediate consequence of menopause and 41.5% were of the opinion that it was hot flushes. [5] Another study conducted in Pakistan that showed that awareness of menopause (95%) women had previously heard of menopause. Thirty (29.4%) respondents had some knowledge of menopausal symptoms. [6]

In this study, there is no statistically significant association between age, occupation, economical status, menopausal status, gravid and overall awareness level of menopause. In study done in Nepal about, age at Menopause among Nepalese Women which showed that an increased age at menopause was found among females with increased level of socioeconomic status. [7] In the study, education status was negatively associated with the awareness level of menopause (p=0.024). It may be due to the experience of illiterate women about menopause. In study done in Iran showed that the level of women's awareness of menopausal symptoms and complication was statistically significant and their number of children, job, education level income level and marital status. [4]

## CONCLUSION

The study showed that about two third of women had good awareness regarding sign and symptoms, complication



of menopause and preventive measures to reduce complication of menopause. There was negative association between overall awareness level and educational status of the women. However there was no association between overall awareness level and age, occupation, economical status, menopause status and gravid.

### Recommendations

Although the overall awareness level of respondents on menopause is satisfactory level, majority of women are not aware on complication of menopause. On the basis of the findings of the study awareness program (formal and informal health education) should be conducted related to sign and symptoms and the prevention to reduce complication of menopause and to maintain women's health.

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### Ethical consideration

Ethical consideration was taken from concerned authority that is Institutional Review Committee of Kathmandu university school of Medical Sciences and verbal consent was taken from the respondents prior to interview.

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