

Knowledge-Attitude-Practice of Sexual Intercourse of Post-menopausal Women Using Hormone Replacement Therapy

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Abstract

Objective : To study knowledge, attitude, practice and concern related to sexual intercourse of post-menopausal women using hormone replacement therapy.

Material and Method : One hundred and thirty subjects were included in the study from the 1st of May 2000 to the 31st of August 2000 at the Menopause Clinic, Srinagarind Hospital, Khon Kaen. All subjects were interviewed by a researcher with structured questionnaires.

Results : Sixty seven per cent of the subjects had an acceptable level of knowledge, whereas, 87.7 per cent thought that they could have sexual intercourse similar to what they had in their pre-menopausal period. It was found that 85.4 per cent and 88.5 per cent of the subjects had either less or absent sexual desire and less sexual activity, respectively. In terms of their concern, 73.9 per cent of the subjects were not worried about sexual intercourse.

Conclusion : The majority of the post-menopausal women using hormone replacement therapy had a good level of knowledge and attitude concerning sexual intercourse. Although most of them had decreased sexual desire and activity, this sexual activity did not cause them concern.

Key word : Sexual Intercourse, Post-menopausal Women, Hormone Replacement Therapy

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In the year 1990, the age of life expectancy extended beyond the age of menopause. Nowadays, twenty to thirty years of a woman's life is spent in

the post-menopausal period. Although menopause is a natural event, some women encounter severe symptoms or diseases in the post-menopausal period.

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Sexual intercourse is one of the most important factors for a healthy family. Many studies have been done related to sexual intercourse in post-menopausal women. After menopause, estrogen reduction leads to decreased sexual desire and sexual response. Moreover, a low level of estrogen is associated with urogenital atrophy resulting in dyspareunia^(1,2). The prevalence of decreased sexual desire in this group of women is about 40-95 per cent⁽³⁻⁵⁾. Absence of sexual intercourse was reported in about 42-73 per cent^(5,6). The underlying reasons were husband factors (62%), decreased sexual desire (4%) and other factors (34%)^(5,6). Dry vagina and dyspareunia were reported in 35 per cent and about 24-45 per cent of these women, respectively^(6,7).

As a result, menopause leads to change in sexual behavior, which is an important part of married life. Therefore, it is important to study knowledge, attitude, practice and concern. The results of the study could be used to improve the quality of life for post-menopausal women.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

A descriptive study was conducted at the Menopause Clinic, Srinagarind Hospital, Khon Kaen from the 1st of May 2000 to the 31st of August 2000. The study protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine, Khon Kaen University. All subjects gave informed consent before the study.

One hundred and thirty subjects were included in the study. The inclusion criteria were post-menopausal women aged 45 years or more, who used hormone replacement therapy and stayed with their husband. The exclusion criteria were post-menopausal women with chronic illness, a history of hysterectomy or bilateral oophorectomy and using drugs affecting sexual behavior. All subjects were interviewed one-by-one by a researcher in a private room. Regarding the structured questionnaire, content validity was approved by experts in menopause and sexology. Reliability testing was performed by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Reliability coefficient of the structured questionnaire was 0.85. In the structured questionnaire, there were 15 closed-end questions for assessing their knowledge, 4 closed-end questions for assessing attitude, 3 closed-end questions for assessing practice and 1 opened-end question for assessing their concerns. To decide whether

they had adequate knowledge or not, the correct answers to 9 of 15 questions (60%) in the part of knowledge were the cutoff point.

Regarding statistical analysis, average age of the subjects, menopause, and husband were presented as mean \pm SD. Academic degree, occupation, income, parity and concurrent diseases were presented as percentage. Regarding knowledge, attitude and practice and their concerns were presented as percentage and narration.

RESULTS

The age of the subjects and their husbands was 46-65 years (mean 54.6 ± 4.2) and 43-75 years (mean 57.4 ± 6.2), respectively. The age of menopause was between 45-55 years (mean 49.4 ± 2.8). Age of marriage was between 17-56 years (mean 25.2 ± 6.2). Mainly, the number of parity were two (30.8%) and three (40%). The most common academic degree for the subjects and husbands was bachelors degree in 36.9 per cent, 48.5 per cent, respectively. The second common academic degree was primary school (31.5%) of the subjects and high school (22.3%) of husbands. Government official was the most common occupation for subjects and husbands in 41.3 per cent and 45.3 per cent, respectively. Mainly, the monthly incomes per family were 20,001-50,000 baht (43.1%) and 10,001-20,000 baht (20.8%). Nearly all of them (99.2% for post-menopausal women and 90.8% for their husbands) had no concurrent diseases. Regarding the bedroom, 86.2 per cent of couples had a private single bedroom; 11.5 per cent had a single bedroom shared with their relatives, whereas, 2.3 per cent of couples had separate bedrooms. The mean duration of hormone replacement therapy was 18.8 months.

For knowledge assessment, 67 per cent of the subjects had adequate knowledge. Some had the wrong knowledge in some aspects. 58.5 per cent of the subjects misunderstood that sexual intercourse led to myoma uteri. Moreover, 44.6 per cent of them understood wrongly that postcoital bleeding was a normal event in postmenopause. Regarding sources of knowledge that they received, the percentage of each source is shown in Fig. 1. Additionally, most of them (83.1%) required additional knowledge with regard to sexual intercourse during the post-menopausal period. The remaining subjects (16.9%) did not require additional knowledge because some did

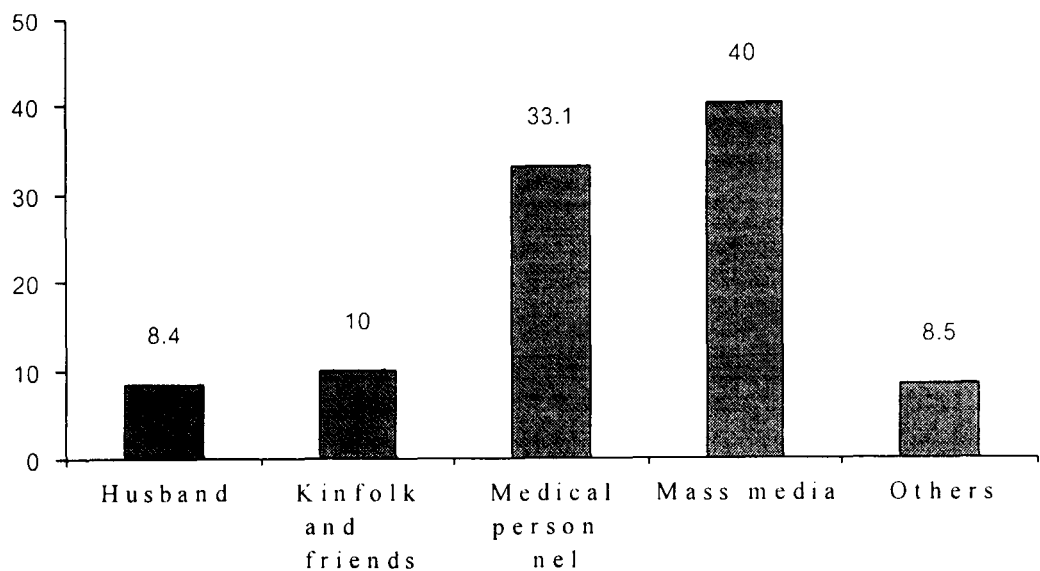


Fig. 1. Sources of knowledge (% of subjects).

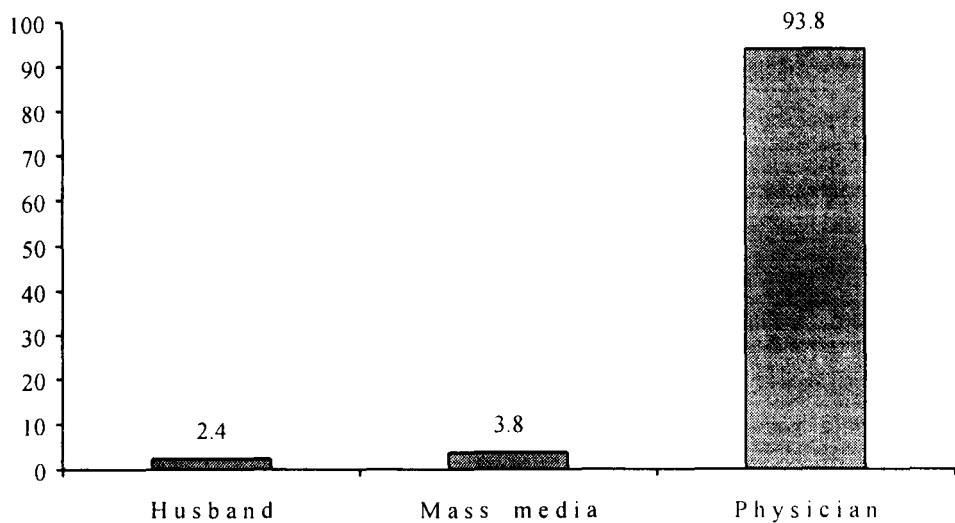


Fig. 2. Preferential sources of knowledge (% of subjects).

not have sexual intercourse (63.6%) and some did not have sexual problems (69.4%). Fig. 2 shows the percentage of preferential sources of knowledge.

Regarding their attitude, 92.9 per cent purposed that talking about sex was not a problem

because sex was natural. Additionally, 87.7 per cent purposed that they could have sexual intercourse similar to what they had before menopause and 79.2 per cent pointed out that sexual intercourse was an important factor in their married life.

Considering practice, 85.4 per cent had either less or absent sexual desire. 56.2 per cent had decreased sexual desire and 29.2 per cent had no sexual desire. Additionally, 88.5 per cent had decreased sexual activity.

Regarding their concern, 73.9 per cent did not worry about sexual intercourse. Only 26.1 per cent worried about sexual intercourse in at least one of the following issues: dyspareunia (55.9%), husband's dissatisfaction (23.6%), future family problem (20.6%), prospect of cervical cancer (17.7%), and urogenital trauma and bleeding (5.9%).

DISCUSSION

Besides adequate knowledge of post-menopausal women (60% of subjects), they had positive attitudes toward sexual intercourse after menopause. Although both sexual desire and activity diminished, 73.9 per cent of post-menopausal women did not worry about it.

Concerning practice, in the year 1972, Pfeiffer E studied 45-69-year-old women and found that sexual desire and activity decreased with advanced age. Thirty per cent of these women had lost sexual desire, which is close to the prevalence in this study⁽³⁾. In Thailand, much research regarding symptoms occurring in menopause has been done since 1992. The first research by Tungphaisal S *et al* revealed that there was diminution in sexual desire in 95 per cent of post-menopausal women⁽⁵⁾. A close figure (86.9%) was also reported in 1993 by Chompootweep S. *et al*⁽⁸⁾. In addition, it was found that 50.7 per cent and 39.8 per cent of paramedical personnel in the post-menopausal period experienced dyspareunia and vaginal dryness⁽⁹⁾ and 10.1 per cent and 79.8 per cent of post-menopausal women in

Klong Toey slum, Bangkok experienced dyspareunia and vaginal dryness⁽¹⁰⁾. The different outcomes might be from the difference in social status.

Regarding research methodology in the present study, a strong point was the reliably structured questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient at 0.85⁽¹¹⁾. The interview by a single researcher had both strength and weakness. This method could be used by both literate and illiterate women and has no inter individual variation in measurement. However, the method deprived the subjects of their privacy in answering the questions and it was time-consuming. From the characteristics of the subjects it could be assumed that most of them came from urban areas which might be a limitation in the generalization of the study, especially in a rural population. However, in a similar setting, the results could be applicable.

Applying the results of the study in clinical practice was not considered an urgent problem because the majority of subjects had adequate knowledge and did not worry about sexual intercourse. Nonetheless, there were some important issues of knowledge such as postcoital bleeding and pathogenesis of myoma uteri that they misunderstood. The authors advocate that an educational program to correct the misconception and for additional knowledge is important. Moreover, physicians should counsel their patients regarding sexual intercourse to support their requirement as demonstrated in the study.

Further study with regard to sexual intercourse for post-menopausal women should focus a rural population which makes up the majority of the Thai population. Additionally a population based study would be more appropriate for further research.

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ความรู้-ทัศนคติ-พฤติกรรม เกี่ยวกับการร่วมเพศของสตรีวัยหมดระดูที่ใช้ฮอร์โมนทดแทน

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วัตถุประสงค์ : เพื่อศึกษา ความรู้-ทัศนคติ พฤติกรรมเกี่ยวกับการร่วมเพศของสตรีวัยหมดระดูที่ใช้ฮอร์โมนทดแทน

วัสดุและวิธีการ : ศึกษาประชากรตัวอย่าง 130 ราย ระหว่าง 1 พฤษภาคม - 31 สิงหาคม พ.ศ. 2543 ที่คลินิกสตรีวัยหมดระดู โรงพยาบาลศรีนครินทร์ จังหวัดขอนแก่น โดยการสัมภาษณ์แบบสอบถามที่จัดเตรียมไว้ด้วยนักวิจัย 1 ท่าน

ผลการศึกษา : ประชากรตัวอย่างร้อยละ 67 มีความรู้ระดับที่ยอมรับได้ และประชากรร้อยละ 87.7 มีความเห็นว่าการร่วมเพศได้ปกติเช่นเดียวกับก่อนเข้าสู่วัยหมดระดู ประชากรร้อยละ 85.4 มีความต้องการทางเพศลดลงหรือไม่มีเลย และร้อยละ 88.5 มีการร่วมเพศลดลง ในเรื่องความกังวลใจต่อการร่วมเพศ พบว่าประชากรตัวอย่างร้อยละ 73.9 ไม่มีปัญหาดังกล่าว

สรุป : สตรีวัยหมดระดูที่ใช้ฮอร์โมนทดแทน ส่วนใหญ่มีความรู้ระดับที่ยอมรับได้และมีทัศนคติที่ดีในการร่วมเพศ ถึงแม้ว่าสตรีวัยหมดระดูส่วนใหญ่มีความต้องการทางเพศและมีการร่วมเพศลดลง แต่สตรีส่วนใหญ่ก็ไม่มี ความกังวลใจเกี่ยวข้องกับเรื่องดังกล่าว

คำสำคัญ : การร่วมเพศ, สตรีวัยหมดระดู, ฮอร์โมนทดแทน

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กนก สีจร, ถวัลย์วงศ์ รัตนสิริ, พิไลวรรณ กลีบแก้ว
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