

Menopause: More Than Just Vasomotor Symptoms

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CONCLUSIONS

- > Women are affected by a wide variety of symptoms throughout menopause, that negatively impact their health and quality of life
- > Menopause also impacts much more than the woman herself; with family, personal relationships and wider society also affected
- > Social stigma makes quantifying the impacts of menopause challenging
- > Increased education, awareness, and policies are needed to support women experiencing menopause across all aspects of their lives

OBJECTIVES

- > To synthesize evidence on the burden of menopause beyond VMS, focusing on the impact of menopause on individuals and wider society.

BACKGROUND

- > For many women, menopause is a natural stage in life; menstruation will cease as a woman reaches the end of her reproductive life. This transition usually occurs between the ages of 45–55 years and can last for up to 14 years^{1,2}
- > Vasomotor symptoms (VMS) are the most common symptoms of menopause occurring in up to 80% of women³ and are approximately lasting for 7–10 years⁴
- > Since VMS are common and associated with considerable impacts on women's quality of life (QoL) and daily functioning, they are often the focus of menopause discussion
- > In addition to VMS there are many other factors associated with menopause that have a significant impact on women and wider society that make menopause challenging. Such factors include other symptoms (e.g., sleep and mood changes) and impacts, social stigma, lack of awareness and support

METHODS

- > Literature searches were performed to expand on a targeted burden of illness (BOI) review of VMS associated with menopause (as reported in Malacan et al. 2023⁵), including searches of MEDLINE®, Embase®, MEDLINE In-Process, Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Database and the National Health Service Economic Evaluation Database (NHS EED); assessment of existing literature reviews, an economic systematic literature review (searches performed in January 2022), a literature review on the epidemiology of menopausal symptoms (searches performed in April 2021); Supplementary targeted searches in Google, Google Scholar and additional bibliographic searches to identify evidence on the impact of menopause beyond VMS (performed in September 2023).

RESULTS

Symptoms occurring during menopause

Menopause is complex, with over 30 different clinical symptoms and impacting numerous aspects of a woman's life⁶ (Figure 1)

- > 31–94% of menopausal women worldwide experience disrupted sleep and insomnia (published between 2017–2020)⁷⁻⁹
- > Experiences of depression/mood swings are well described for menopausal women¹⁰⁻¹² with 51–55% of menopausal women suffering from anxiety and depression (published in 2021)⁹
- > Compared to women without menopausal symptoms in the same age group (US; 2005), women experiencing menopausal symptoms reported:¹³
 - Significantly lower levels of health-related QoL (HRQoL)
 - Significantly higher work impairment
 - Significantly higher impairment in daily activities

Menopausal symptoms also impact partnerships and familial relationships

- > 23% of menopausal women reported feeling isolated from their family (UK; 2017)¹⁴
- > 77% of spouses reported feeling negatively affected by their partners' menopause symptoms (US; 2018)¹⁵

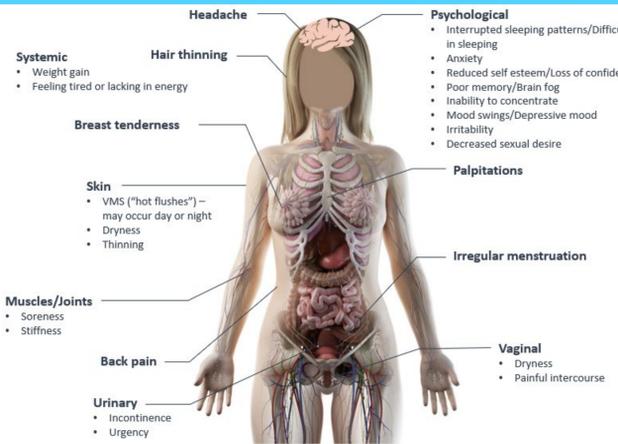
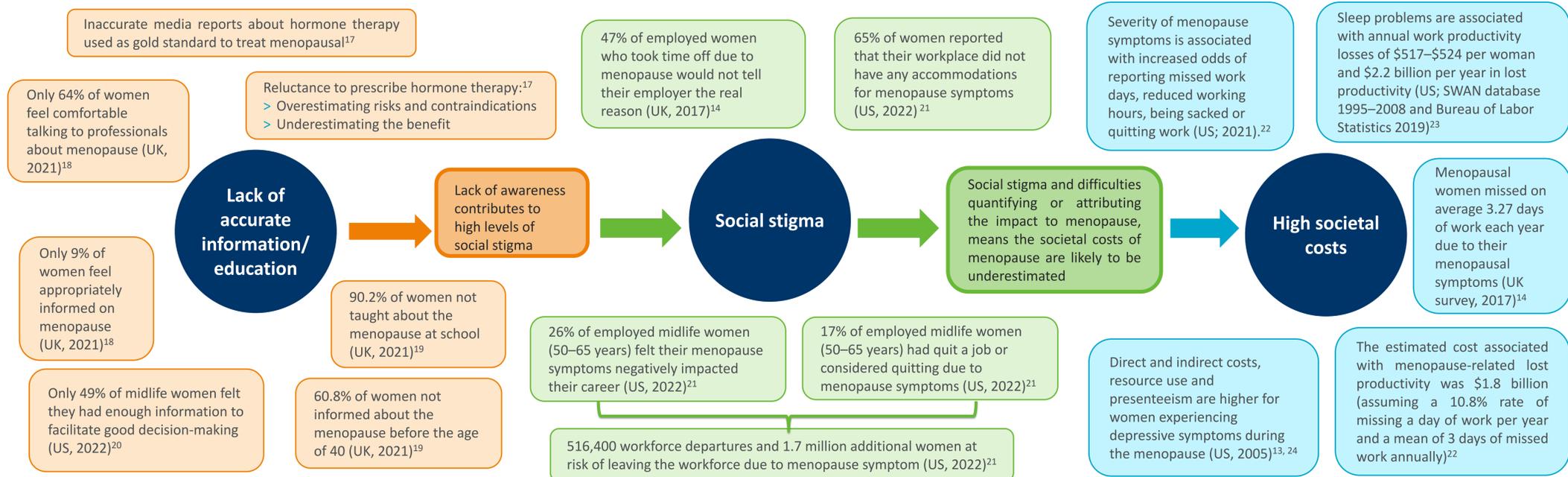


Figure 1. Examples of menopausal symptoms

Sleep disturbances and mood changes can affect health and QoL in menopausal women independently of VMS

- The annual prevalence of moderate/severe poor sleep, in women during menopause transition, ranged between 28–35%, and also occurs in the absence of hot flushes (US; 1996–2012).¹⁶
- Significant risk factors included baseline severity of poor sleep ($p < 0.0001$), moderate/severe hot flushes ($p < 0.0001$), anxiety ($p < 0.0001$) and perceived stress ($p = 0.016$) in the adjusted multivariable model¹⁶
- Sleep disruption secondary to menopausal symptoms can lead to carelessness, impaired alertness and mental acuity, forgetfulness and decreased productivity at work; it can also affect daytime productivity, and social and familial relationships due to lack of sleep, irritability and tiredness¹⁰
- In a regression model of menopausal symptoms to predict health outcomes (US; 2005), depression and anxiety had the largest effect on mental aspects of HRQoL as assessed by the mental component summary scores of the SF-8¹³

The wider impact of menopause



What more can be done to support menopausal women?

More accurate information on menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatments (Figure 2) should be made available to women throughout their lifetime, starting from early education until the onset of symptoms and beyond

- > Most women want the menopause to be taught at school (83.6%) followed by the doctor's surgery (64.8%) (UK survey, 2021)¹⁹
- > Good knowledge of the menopause, especially implementing educational programs and seeking care is related to improved health and better QoL (Spain, 2020)^{20,25}

Workplaces need to support women experiencing challenging menopausal symptoms

- > 57% of women experiencing menopause stated it would be important to them if a potential employer expressed a commitment to support employees with menopause symptoms (US survey, 2022)²¹
- > There are many sources of guidance for ways in which employers can and should support women experiencing menopause, such as:^{20, 21, 26, 27}

Offer flexible working arrangements

Create an open, inclusive and supportive culture with respect to menopause

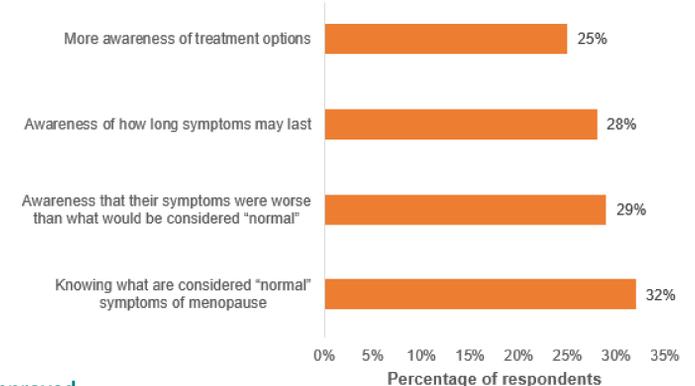
Provide training and general awareness initiatives

Develop policies and guidance specifically for menopause

There has been increasing publicity around the challenges of menopause however, the portrayal of menopause in the media should be improved

- > Some celebrities in the UK have created documentaries about their experiences of menopause to raise awareness; they presented evidence with input from clinical experts in a simple and visual way that women felt they could trust²⁸
- > Negative and stigmatized discourse in UK mainstream media (2010–2021) is entangled within the biomedical perspective (e.g., "decline", "dysfunction", "unpredictable behaviour"), which raises awareness but also exacerbates the taboo²⁹
- > Increased recognition and awareness results in increased demand for services, support and products. Some clinics have long waiting times and demand for therapies may surpass supply resulting in products becoming unavailable.³⁰
- > There is limited capacity to ensure information sources available to women are up to date in a synchronized and coherent manner.²⁸ Additional service provisions are needed to provide all women with the support they need

Figure 2. Factors that would influence midlife women to seek care for their menopause symptoms earlier (US, 2022)²⁰



Disclosures

Jean Malacan was an employee of Bayer Consumer Carer AG, Basel, Switzerland at the time of producing this poster. Kristina Bolling is an employee of Bayer U.S. LLC, Whippany, NJ, USA. Claudia Haberland is an employee of Bayer AG, Berlin, Germany. Lucian Gaianu was employee of Bayer Public Limited Company, Reading, UK at the time of producing this poster. Nicola Smith, Matthew Woods, and Michelle Smith are employees of Lumanity, UK.

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References

References are available on request and in the online version of the poster available via the QR code

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