

## Menopausal Myths in Our Society Critical Incidence Analysis

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### Introduction

In most of the cultures of our society, it has been observed that there is a difference in how women perceive their own reproductive health. Most of these beliefs and understandings are involved with a level of wisdom and spirituality, but some may lead to behaviors that are detrimental to their health needs. There are certain comprehensive bundles of social and cultural beliefs and norms that ultimately affect women and their health-seeking behaviors. A similar issue was identified in rahimabad colony during my RH rotation which displays the scenario where the woman was 55 yrs old. She was uneducated and is suffering with osteoporosis and anemia since 8 yrs after her menopause. When questioned she verbalized that she do not eat the foods which are high in iron such as liver, spinach and others as they are thought to be hot in nature and as she is going through her post-menopausal period it is necessary not to take hot food items which would alter her health. Moreover she do not seek any medical help as she belief it is due to menopause as blood is not removing out of the body so new blood is not forming that is why she is suffering from anemia. Furthermore she thinks her osteoporosis is due to her intensive physical activity while doing household chores and not due to menopause and because of this she stopped her daily routine activities to overcome her disease. Besides that she also stated that she do not know anything about menopause and its symptoms and how to handle it whatever her relatives ask her to do she implies them.

Health beliefs of any individual or a group of people cover an understanding of the body and how its functions, the cause of illness occurring and its treatment. They differ incredibly depending on the values, beliefs and myths. Basically "Menopause is the depletion of ovarian function followed by cessation of menstruation and is usually diagnosed when a woman who do not have menstrual period for 12 consecutive months without any other biological or physiological cause" (Arryo & Yeh, 2005). In the above mentioned scenario the woman suffering from anemia is not directly linked with menopause but the myths and cultural beliefs during menopause is leading her to a condition which is worsening gradually. "Symptoms experienced during menopause are influenced by social and cultural

beliefs and this result in altered perception of symptoms in different population" (Nusrat, et al, 2008). As it is stated in the above quotation cultural beliefs and myths greatly influence individual's experience of symptoms. The cause behind this is illiteracy and lack of awareness among the society. Moreover she is also not aware about the changes in body during menopause which is evident from her expression on osteoporosis which is furthermore affecting her health practices and behaviors. My heart was feeling very down in the dumps and I was thinking that how cultural beliefs and myths concerning health can significantly impact overall health of individual. Due to some cultural beliefs and myths the woman is compromising her health and she is not even aware about it. On the other hand education and knowledge plays a key role in the preservation of health. If the woman is educated there would be different perception of her on the cultural beliefs and myths and would never compromise her health. "Health literacy is important from both an individual and a public health viewpoint and affects behaviors such as taking medicine correctly, uptake of health screening, for example mammograms, and an understanding of preventive health measures" (Benson, 2010). According to a study conducted on 100 women conducted at JPMC Karachi Pakistan in the year 2010 shows that in 93% among 79 illiterate and 57% among 21 literate women were unfamiliar of menopause and its complications. This statistic clearly depicts that in our society illiteracy is at peak due to which woman give up into myths and beliefs which simultaneously impacts their health and practices. Secondly awareness regarding menopausal symptoms and its management is correspondingly very essential to be provided among the woman as the awareness about breast cancer and other disease. Due to lack of awareness woman try up different myths and do what others ask them to do base on their own experiences of menopause. "It is imperative to remember that menopausal symptoms show a discrepancy in individual to individual and ethnic groups to demographic areas" (Deangelis, 2010). As a student at that time I realize that the myths related to the menopause still have strong hold in our community and I felt it is important to clarify her concept in the way that it does not disrupt her

cultural belief. I corrected few of the misconceptions of my client and insisted her to visit a reproductive health clinic. I also gave her teaching accordingly about anemia, its causes and management and also told her about the symptoms of menopause. After the teaching my client was shocked on her own concept for menopause and she thanked me for the information been provided.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, cultural beliefs and myths significantly play a key role in determining health seeking behaviors and practices of any individual. Access to proper healthcare and its outcome is also determined by the status of women in any society, their tradition and expectations. It is highly important that women should be educated and aware regarding menopause, its symptoms, post menopause complications and its treatment options through schools, education systems, health care providers and basic health institutions. Combined efforts should be taken through educational programs by health care providers and educating systems to increase public

awareness. That may result in momentous improvement in the life expectancy and quality of life of women in future.

### References

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