

Alleviating the stress of the climacteric period: Role of family

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Dear Editor,

Menopause, a natural cessation of menstruation marks an important milestone in the lives of women. Defined as "The permanent cessation of menses due to loss of ovarian follicular functions," It is predicted that over 1.2 billion women will be peri or post-menopausal by 2030. (1) Although not a mental illness, the hormonal shifts during menopause can trigger or exacerbate psychological symptoms like anxiety, depression, and mood swings in "Climacteric period." Asian women specifically are more likely to suffer from depression and irritability. (2) It can also affect social life like relationships, work performance, and self-esteem.

Some of these effects may be managed by seeking professional help, lifestyle modifications, and awareness initiatives, but role of understanding, empathetic husband as support system during partner's menopause is crucial offering help and having open communication about her needs.

A systematic review by X. Zhang et al (3) concluded that spousal support for peri-menopausal women makes a significant positive effect on their Quality of Life. Understanding of menopause in males is lacking as per various surveys. Most husbands reported confusion regarding menopause and had mostly learned what they knew through their wives. Some also viewed menopause as a 'disease' or 'excuse'. Husbands are most likely to recognize mood swings and sexual function changes, timely detection of which can reduce marital strain. 77% participants of 450 men surveyed by Parish SJ. et al (4) reported that their partner's menopause had a negative effect on their own lives with 56% reporting that menopause has negatively impacted their marital relationship.

Learning & educating symptoms and stages of menopause, while understanding individual variation in presentation is a first key step. Encouraging open communication and activities like yoga, meditation helps to manage stress and improve sleep quality. Trigger factors if any should be avoided. Her needs and desires should be respected providing affection, and spending quality time together. It's a temporary phase in relationship, so both partners should navigate it together successfully. Training in menopausal health can improve

marital satisfaction during this transitional phase; hence designing and implementing educational programs for husband is highly recommended. (5)

Lack of education, misguided belief system and societal dynamics are decidedly persistent impediments. Better informed husband provides better spousal support and can alleviate symptoms of menopause leading to overall happier and less stressed family units. Finally, breaking down the stigma behind menses and menopause can open up the doors of communication making life easier for family.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

All authors have contributed equally.

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