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Original article

Factors associated with the severity of menopausal symptoms in postmenopausal Brazilian women



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ABSTRACT

Purposes: To identify the socio-demographic and anthropometric profile and correlate them with the severity of menopausal symptoms in postmenopausal women.

Methods: Cross-sectional study with 201 postmenopausal women attended in a Gynecology Outpatient Department in Rio de Janeiro city (RJ, Brazil). A questionnaire was applied for collection of demographic, socioeconomic, clinical and lifestyle variables. The Blatt-Kupperman Menopausal Index was used to evaluate the menopausal symptoms.

Results: Women with moderate to severe symptoms (≥ 20) corresponded to 57.7% (116) of the sample. Obesity was not associated with the severity of menopausal symptoms ($p < 0.90$). Severe to moderate symptoms were inversely associated with age (PR 0.96; CI 95% 0.94–0.99; $p < 0.01$). Women within 6–10 years of menopause presented nearly 1.4 times higher prevalence of moderate to severe symptoms compared with those with more than 10 years of menopause. Unemployed women (PR 1.52; CI 95% 1.13–2.04; $p < 0.01$) and housewives (PR 1.53; CI 95% 1.12–2.09; $p < 0.01$) presented higher prevalence of menopausal symptoms compared with working women. Tobaccoism was associated with higher prevalence of moderate to severe symptoms ($p < 0.01$).

Conclusions: Age constituted a protection factor for moderate to severe symptoms, whereas having within 6–10 years of menopause, smoking and being unemployed or a housewife were factors related to higher prevalence of moderate to severe menopausal symptoms.

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Fatores associados com a intensidade dos sintomas menopausais em mulheres brasileiras na pós-menopausa

R E S U M O

Objetivo: Identificar o perfil sociodemográfico e antropométrico e associá-los com a intensidade dos sintomas menopausais em mulheres na pós-menopausa.

Palavras-chave:

Intensidade dos sintomas menopausais

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Fatores de risco
Sinais e sintomas
Sintomas menopausais

Métodos: Estudo transversal com 201 mulheres na pós-menopausa atendidas em um ambulatório de ginecologia no Rio de Janeiro/RJ. Foi aplicado um questionário para coleta das variáveis demográficas, socioeconômicas, clínicas e hábitos de vida. O Índice Menopausal de Blatt-Kupperman (IMBK) foi utilizado para avaliar os sintomas menopausais.

Resultados: Mulheres com sintomas moderados a grave (≥ 20) corresponderam a 57,7% (116) da amostra. A obesidade não foi associada com a intensidade de sintomas menopausais ($p < 0,90$). Os sintomas moderados a intensos associaram-se inversamente com a idade (RP 0,96; IC95% 0,94–0,99; $p < 0,01$). Mulheres com tempo de menopausa entre 6 e 10 anos apresentaram cerca de 1,4 vezes maior prevalência de sintomas moderados a intensos quando comparadas com aquelas com mais de 10 anos de menopausa. Mulheres desempregadas (RP 1,52; IC95% 1,13–2,04; $p < 0,01$) e donas de casa (RP 1,53; IC95% 1,12–2,09; $p < 0,01$) apresentaram maior prevalência de sintomas menopausais quando comparadas com mulheres trabalhando. O tabagismo foi associado a maior prevalência de sintomas moderados a intensos ($p < 0,01$).

Conclusões: A idade constituiu fator de proteção para sintomas moderados a intensos. Enquanto que ter entre 6 à 10 anos de tempo de menopausa, ser tabagista e ser desempregada ou dona de casa foram fatores associados a uma maior prevalência de sintomas menopausais moderados a intensos.

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Introduction

Menopause is an event that marks the end of the reproductive phase of a woman. This condition is caused by the reduction of the ovarian function, with gradual decrease of female sexual hormones leading to menstrual cycle interruption. The period after the definite interruption of menstruation, in other words, after the absence of menstrual cycles for twelve consecutive months is characterized by post-menopause.¹ This period, for times, is accompanied by vasomotor, psychological and urogenital symptoms, besides metabolic and cardiovascular alterations, like osteoporosis, cardiovascular diseases and alterations in the distribution of physical fat.²⁻⁴

In Brazil, changes in morbidity and mortality patterns from infectious diseases to chronic non-communicable diseases, along with life expectancy increase, have brought an important impact to questions related to female aging.⁵ Nearly 28% of women (24.3 million) are aged 40 years and older in Brazil and, in the city of Rio de Janeiro the female population estimate of 2010 was 3.09 million women, of which 34.1% were in the age group 40–64 years.⁶ Menopause typically occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, and woman life expectancy is around 70 years. Therefore, the post-menopause period corresponds to around 1/3 of a woman's lifespan.⁷

The severity of menopausal symptoms compromise daily life activities and social life; thus, impairing quality of life and negatively impacting on public health.⁸ Menopausal symptoms may vary in frequency and severity.⁹ Therefore some studies have investigated factors that can be associated with the severity of these symptoms, such as age^{8,10} menopausal stage,¹¹⁻¹³ socioeconomic aspects,^{8,12} lifestyle,^{8,12,14,15} chronic conditions and comorbidities^{12,14,16-18}; but some findings are conflicting between studies.

Due to the conflicting evidences in the literature, further studies that investigate possible predictor factors to the severity of menopausal symptoms in postmenopausal

women are necessary. This information is important so that health professionals can intervene more appropriately and specifically.¹⁹ Thus, the objective of the present study was to identify the socio-demographic and anthropometric profile and associate it with the severity of menopausal symptoms in postmenopausal women attended in the Gynecology Outpatient Department (Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, FIOCRUZ, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil).

Methods

This is a cross-sectional study. The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the National Institute of Women, Children and Adolescents Health Fernandes Figueira (IFF), Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (FIOCRUZ, RJ, Brazil) and performed in a reference Gynecology Outpatient Department in Rio de Janeiro city. The data collection period was August to December/2013. The study population was constituted by postmenopausal women attended by the subspecialties of urogynecology, general gynecology and reproductive endocrinology in the above-mentioned outpatient department.

Women aged between 45 and 65 years and without menstrual periods for 12 consecutive months or more (post-menopausal period) were included in the study. Women who were taking hormone replacement therapy (HRT) or had interrupted this treatment for less than 12 months, submitted to chemotherapy or radiotherapy due to cancer, to bilateral oophorectomy or presented decompensated hypothyroidism and/or Cushing's disease, or clinical history of premature menopause, i.e. menstrual cycle interruption earlier than 40 years of age¹⁷ were excluded from the study. Laboratorial tests (Thyroid-Stimulating Hormone, TSH; Free Thyroxine, free T4 and Follicle-Stimulating Hormone, FSH) were requested for all study participants, for eligibility purposes. Decompensated hypothyroidism was characterized

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