



Menopause and psychological well-being

Dr Liz Simpson

Psychology Research Institute, Ulster University

Email: eea.simpson@ulster.ac.uk
ulster.ac.uk



Overview of talk

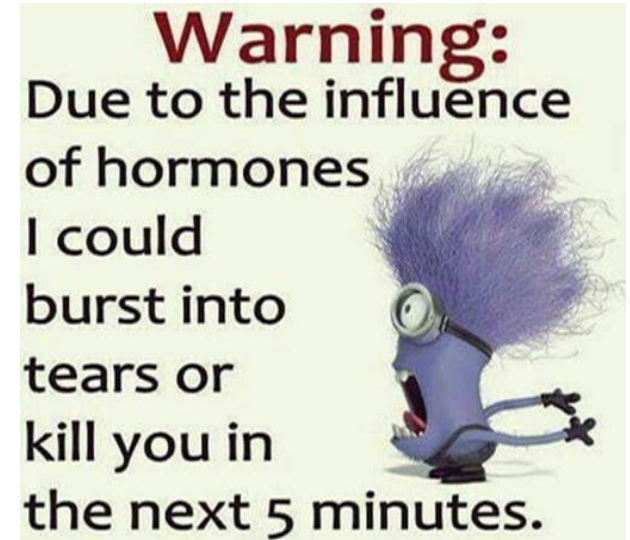
- Symptoms of menopause
- Impact on Quality of life and well-being
- Psychological symptoms
 - Depression and anxiety
 - Cognitive function
 - Stress and coping
 - Social and personal changes
- What good about menopause?
-  Psychological interventions



Symptoms of menopause?

Increased symptoms in some women:

- Vasomotor symptoms
- Somatic symptoms
- Psychological symptoms



Decline in quality of life

- 1.5 million women affected in UK

Psychological symptoms

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Irritability
- Sleep problems
- Tiredness
- Loss of libido
- Worries about body image
- Self esteem
- Forgetfulness and difficulty concentrating



Origins or cause of these are more difficult to establish

Psychological problems:

Depression and anxiety

- Increases in depressed mood and symptoms of anxiety
- Maybe more prevalent during peri-menopause
 - Somatic
 - Anxiety/insomnia
 - General distress (GHQ)
- No evidence that there is an increase in psychiatric disorders



Psychological symptoms:

Memory

Memory problems:

- attention,
- concentration,
- recall of information

Clinical sample – RBMT – 58% had scores that were poor to impaired function

- Recall – story recall
- Prospective memory – appointment
- Spatial memory – route around a room

Community sample – RBMT-E – Peri-menopause poor CF in comparison to pre and post menopausal groups

- Recall and spatial memory



“....suddenly you get this brain fog and you can’t remember where you’ve put things..”

“.. I had all the symptoms on the check list”

Psychological symptoms:

Stress

Menopause:

- Source stress
 - symptoms
- Coincide with stressors

Psychological symptoms associated with the menopause - accounted for around 36% of the variability in performance at work (Guekes et al., 2012).

Stress and coping in menopause

- Family problems
- Menopausal symptoms
- Work related problems
- Daily hassles
- Other - health

Book chapter:

Simpson, EEA (2016) Stress in menopause. From Fink, G. (2016): Stress: concepts, cognition, emotion and behaviour.

Simpson & Thompson (2009) Maturatis 63, 357-364.

Social changes

Stressful life events –
coincide with menopause:

- Loss of fertility
- Death of a spouse/parent
- Empty nest syndrome
- Becoming a grandparent
- Retirement
- Divorce



• Changes in Social support

Stereotypical beliefs about menopause

Personal view of menopause:

- Ageing
- Growing older
- A loss of self



Cultural differences:

- Influence symptom reporting
- Help seeking behaviours



Taboo subject

"I actually love being
menopausal"
"settled"
"grown up"

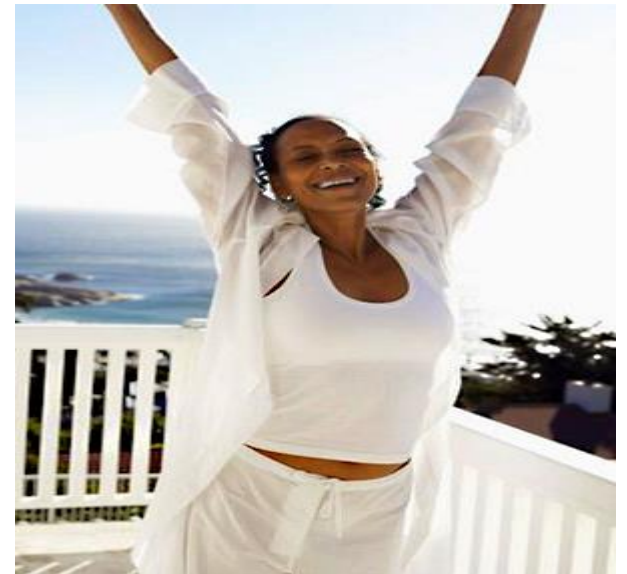
Impact on well-being

- Domino effect



What so good about menopause?

- End to monthly periods
- End to fluctuations in mood
 - No feelings of PMS
- Sex without worrying about pregnancy
- Self reflection
- Rush of energy
- Empowerment
- Building social networks



Psychological interventions

- Education and knowledge
- Reduce stress and anxiety:
 - Progressive muscle relaxation
 - Controlled breathing
 - Visualisation
- Problem focused coping
- Behaviour change – lifestyle - diet and Physical Activity
- Counselling
- Brain active – puzzles, reading, learning new skills



Menopause research at Ulster

Past research

PhD

- The impact of menopause and HRT on everyday working memory, ERPs in clinical and non-clinical settings Dr Christina Geary
- Promotion of physical activity in pre, peri and postmenopausal women using the theory of planned behaviour Dr Julie Doherty

Current & ongoing research

Funded

- The effect of soya foods on cognitive function and menopausal symptoms in postmenopausal women. Funded by ALPRO Foundation.
- Dr Pamela Magee

PhD

- Social cognitive models of behaviour change and their contribution to our understanding of HRT use in menopausal women Mrs Adele McLaughlin

MSc Health Psychology/Nutrition (Biomed)

- Employing the Health Beliefs Model to determine predictors of soy product use in middle-aged women
- How do women cope with the long-term consequences of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) and Menopause?
- What's normal about the 'change of life'? An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the experience of menopause

Menopause café Belfast

Festival of Social Science NI

- Wednesday 7th November 2018
 - The Mac, Belfast
 - 7-9pm



Book tickets:

<https://esrc.ukri.org/public-engagement/festival-of-social-science/festival-events/events-in-northern-ireland/menopause-cafe-all-you-need-to-know/>

Menopause

Thank you for listening
&
Any questions??

