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Should the management of menopause in the Middle East be different?

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Anthropologists have shown that menopause has surprising variations according to ethnic group, society and social group, in terms of women's physical symptoms and attitude.

The Middle East (ME) region consists of 20 countries extending from the Arabian Gulf to the Atlantic ocean, inhabited mostly by Arabs. Unfortunately the word "menopause" translates in Arabic to mean "the hopeless age" or "the age of despair". This negative connotation has resulted in a more premenopausal woman with negative attitude towards menopause. However, observation and that of others is that women's perception in the post-menopause is different. It is like a pendulum swinging from "fear of the unknown" in the pre-menopause to "piece of mind" in the post-menopause. Severe menopausal symptoms (mainly vasomotor and psychological), on the other hand, are experienced most in their peri-menopausal stage. The severity of menopausal symptoms at this stage can be partially explained by the relatively younger age at which ME women commence their mid-life transition when compared to western population. Observational studies have shown that cultural, religious and family issues contribute immensely to the ME perception of menopause, while the severity of symptoms has been attributed to socioeconomic status.

Apart from encouraging research in this area, education, counseling, establishing specialized clinics and introducing hormonal therapy and their alternatives along with other measures are the least to recommend for a safe deployment of the ME women to menopause.

Biography

Hisham Arab is a Senior Consultant Gynecologist in private practice in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He received his postgraduate training in Obstetrics and Gynecology in Canada. Since his return to his homeland he pursued the role of women health advocate. He advanced the science of Obstetrics and Gynecology in Saudi Arabia and pioneered many clinical and research achievements. He wrote extensively in Arabic and English language on 5 major topics: Menopause, Genital Infection and Hygiene, Diabetes, Endometriosis, and Infertility. He is a Founder and the Secretary General of the Saudi Obstetrics and Gynecological Society (SOGS).

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