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Study Suggests Hot Flashes Could Be Precursor to Diabetes

Analysis of Women's Health Initiative data demonstrates effect of severity and duration of hot flashes on risk of developing diabetes

CLEVELAND, Ohio (Dec 6, 2017)—Hot flashes, undoubtedly the most common symptom of menopause, are not just uncomfortable and inconvenient, but numerous studies demonstrate they may increase the risk of serious health problems, including heart disease. A new study suggests that hot flashes (especially when accompanied by night sweats) also may increase the risk of developing diabetes. Results are being published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

As reported in “Vasomotor symptom characteristics: are they risk factors for incident diabetes?” data was analyzed from the more than 150,000 postmenopausal women who participated in the Women’s Health Initiative (WHI) to confirm that the occurrence of hot flashes was associated with an elevated diabetes risk. Of the total population studied, 33% of the women had experienced hot flashes. Any incidence of hot flashes was associated with an 18% increased diabetes risk, and this risk continued to climb on the basis of the severity and duration of the hot flashes. Moreover, diabetes risk was the most pronounced for women reporting any type of night sweats but only if the onset of hot flashes occurred late in the menopause transition.

Diabetes is a serious health risk currently affecting 15% of women aged 55 years and older. Its incidence is expected to more than double by 2050. Compared with men with diabetes, women with diabetes have a higher risk of being hospitalized for or dying from diabetes and its complications, which makes the timely identification and management of diabetes through lifestyle intervention or medical management critical.

“This study showed that, after adjustment for obesity and race, women with more severe night sweats, with or without hot flashes, still had a higher risk of diabetes,” says Dr. JoAnn Pinkerton, NAMS executive director. “Menopause is a perfect time to encourage behavior changes that reduce menopause symptoms, as well as the risk of diabetes and heart disease. Suggestions include getting regular exercise and adequate sleep, avoiding excess alcohol, stopping smoking, and eating a heart-healthy diet. For symptomatic women, hormone therapy started near menopause improves menopause symptoms and reduces the risk of diabetes.”

For more information about menopause and healthy aging, visit www.menopause.org.

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Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America’s leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—

including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.