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Child Abuse Associated with Physiologically Detected Hot Flashes

New study found that childhood emotional abuse is linked with an increase in physiologically detected hot flashes over midlife

CLEVELAND, Ohio (September 24, 2019)—Childhood abuse has been shown to lead to an array of health problems later in life. A new study now shows that such abuse may be linked with physiologically detected hot flashes. Study results will be presented during The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) Annual Meeting in Chicago, September 25-28, 2019.

Hot flashes are the focus of many research studies, especially since newer data has indicated that they may last longer than previously thought—some as long as 10+ years. Previous research has shown a relationship between childhood abuse and hot flashes. However, this prior work has only used self-reported measures of hot flashes. Physiologic measurements of hot flashes are important given difficulties reporting hot flashes, particularly during sleep. Further, the studies have not looked at changes in hot flashes over time, which is important given how long hot flashes can last.

The researchers leveraged a unique study that employed longitudinal physiologic measurements of hot flashes at two time points over five years to show that childhood abuse was associated with more sleep hot flashes, both at a single time point, as well as increases in hot flashes over five years, after adjusting for age, race/ethnicity, education, and BMI.

“Our investigation found that childhood sexual and physical abuse were associated with more frequent hot flashes during sleep when measured at a single time point. We also learned that women with a history of emotional abuse showed an *increase* in hot flashes five years later, whereas their non-abused counterparts showed a *decrease* in hot flashes five years later,” says Mary Carson, lead author of the study from the Department of Psychology at the University of Pittsburgh.

“Hot flashes can significantly affect a woman's quality of life, so studies like these are important in helping healthcare providers understand all of the variables associated with them,” says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director.

Mary Carson and Dr. Faubion are available for interviews before the presentation at the Annual Meeting.

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

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.