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Severe Menopause Symptoms Often Accompany Premature Ovarian Insufficiency

New study suggests that women with premature ovarian insufficiency experience a higher prevalence and severity of psychological and sexual menopause symptoms than women undergoing natural menopause

CLEVELAND, Ohio (Jan. 20, 2021)—Hot flashes, insomnia, and vaginal dryness are commonly reported symptoms that accompany the menopause transition. A new study suggests that such symptoms—especially psychological and sexual problems—are worse for women who have premature ovarian insufficiency (POI) than for women undergoing natural menopause. Study results are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

Premature ovarian insufficiency is defined as the cessation of ovarian function that leads to menopause before the age of 40 years. The condition is associated with increased risks for a number of long-term health comorbidities, including osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, mood disorders, cognitive impairment, and sexual dysfunction. It can also lead to a shorter life expectancy.

Despite research around the various risk factors associated with POI, few studies have examined the effect of POI relative to the prevalence, severity, and factors affecting menopause symptoms. In this new study involving nearly 300 Chinese women, researchers specifically investigated menopause symptoms in women with POI and compared them with the severity and prevalence of similar symptoms in women who experienced natural menopause.

What they found was that women with POI experience a high prevalence of menopause symptoms, especially those in the psychological and sexual domains, and that these symptoms are often more severe than those experienced by women who undergo natural menopause. The symptoms likely to be most severe include mood swings, hot flashes, insomnia, fatigue, and sexual dysfunction (including vaginal dryness, dyspareunia, and decreased libido).

On the basis of these results, the researchers have suggested that healthcare providers be more cognizant of psychological complications and sexual dysfunction risks in women with POI and work with them to identify options for relief.

Results are published in the article “Menopausal symptoms in women with premature ovarian insufficiency: prevalence, severity and associated factors.”

“This study of Chinese women showed that those with POI had more prevalent menopause-related symptoms than women with menopause at the average age. It is important to note that regardless of the prevalence or severity of symptoms, women with POI should receive hormone therapy at least until the average age of menopause unless there are contraindications to its use in order to mitigate potential long-term adverse health effects, including fractures, heart disease, cognitive impairment, and early mortality—in addition to mood disturbances and sexual dysfunction,” says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director.

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