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Shedding Light on New Treatment Options for Perimenopausal Depression and Sleep Problems

*New study suggests efficacy of sleep and light therapy in improving mood and sleep
by altering circadian rhythms and sleep/wake cycles*

CLEVELAND, Ohio (October 3, 2018)—Light therapy has long been a recognized treatment option for depression. But can it help perimenopausal women struggling with depression and sleep problems as the result of hormone changes? A new study from the University of California suggests that it can by altering a woman's natural sleep/wake cycle. Preliminary study results will be presented during The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) Annual Meeting in San Diego, October 3-6, 2018.

Over the years, much has been learned about the benefits of sleep and light therapy. Numerous studies have documented the therapeutic value of total and partial wake therapy, as well as light therapy, in treating depressive disorders linked to women's reproductive menstrual cycles. Other studies have shown that sleep/wake cycles (technically known as melatonin circadian rhythms) are often phase-delayed (shifted later) in women with perimenopausal depression.

Putting the results of the various studies together, researchers in California hypothesized that depression and sleep quality could be improved in women with perimenopausal depression by phase-advancing (shifting earlier) circadian rhythms of melatonin in relation to the sleep/wake cycle. What they found was that through various sleep intervention and light therapy techniques they were able to significantly improve the mood scores of the study participants in as few as two weeks.

"This study demonstrates that women with perimenopausal depression and sleep issues may now have a non-pharmacological and non-hormonal option that may help with sleep and improve their mood," says Dr. Barbara Parry, lead author of the study from the University of California in San Diego.

"The results of this study will hopefully lead to additional research that will provide symptomatic women more options than were previously available," says Dr. JoAnn Pinkerton, NAMS executive director."

Drs. Parry and Pinkerton are available for interviews before the presentation at the Annual Meeting.

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.