

MEDICAL LITERACY AND OPINION OF WOMEN ON HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY IN MENOPAUSE



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Background

In the setting of contradictory views and inconclusive evidence, it can be difficult for menopausal women to form a non-biased, objective opinion regarding hormone replacement therapy (HRT). The use of HRT is a health-related decision that requires detailed information and consideration of potential risks and benefits. We aimed to evaluate whether middle-aged women are prone to take HRT, their attitudes and perceptions towards using HRT, as well as specific concerns and information sources on HRT.

Material & Methods

The study was carried out during three days in February 2020 and took place in three family physician offices and one gynecology office in Zagreb. The anonymous survey included 9 questions and tested the perspective and knowledge of participants about the benefits and risks of HRT. The participants were women ≥ 45 years of age. All participants gave their informed consent prior to their inclusion in the study.

Results

A total of 36 surveys were collected, 14 in primary gynecology office and 22 in family physician offices. Most women were informed (67%) about HRT. The main reasons for participants not using HRT (89%) were not feeling the need to use it and the belief that menopause is a natural process that does not need to be treated. Additional reasons were: insufficient knowledge, fear of cancer, and the use of alternative medicine. Conversely, survey participants using HRT (11%) cited the trust in their physician's recommendation as the main argument of approval. Additional reasons for HRT use were alleviation in performing daily activities and improvement of quality of life.

Table 1 Participants' age groups and interview responses

Age (years)	n (%)	
45 – 55	16	(44)
> 55	20	(56)
Total	36	(100)

Interview question	Yes [n (%)]	No [n (%)]
Are you currently employed?	27 (75)	9 (25)
Are you currently in menopause?	20 (56)	16 (44)
Do you think menopause is a disease?	3 (8)	33 (92)
Do you know something about HRT*?	24 (67)	12 (33)

* Hormone replacement therapy

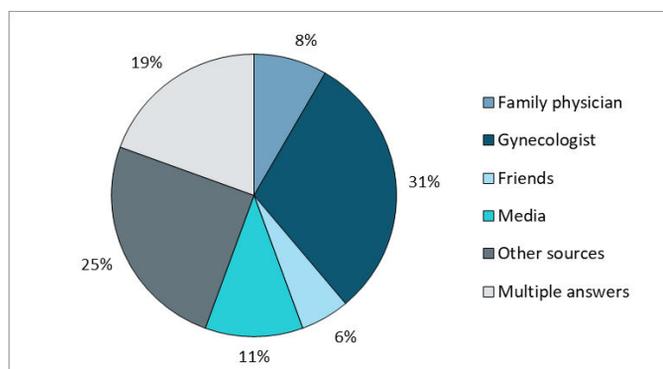


Figure 1 Sources of information about hormone replacement therapy

Conclusion

Our study suggests the importance of health care workers in affecting menopausal women's opinion regarding HRT use. Undoubtedly, due to prejudice and insufficient education on this topic, women could be unfavorably influencing their quality of life. As health care providers, it is important to discuss with women both the benefits and risks of HRT and make the decision depending supremely on their willingness, as well as the debilitating symptoms they are experiencing, their medical and family history.