Women's decision-making about the use of hormonal and non-hormonal remedies for the menopausal transition

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*Et al.*
Women’s Decision making About the Use of Hormonal and Non-hormonal Remedies for the Menopausal Transition

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Introduction

- **Background and Significance:**
  - 30 million women are going through menopause
  - 6 million will experience menopause in the next 10 years
  - By the year 2020 the number of women over age 50 will double
  - Studies about women’s decision-making were done prior to the release of the Women’s Health Initiative Study results. Thus, it is unclear if the process is the same.

- **Purpose**
  - To describe women’s experiences when making decisions about the use of hormonal or non-hormonal remedies during or after the menopausal transition.

- **Method: Qualitative Descriptive**
  - Inclusion criteria: perimenopausal or postmenopausal, currently making a decision about menopausal management (either initial or revised)
  - Women were recruited from a midlife women’s health nurse practitioner practice via flyers

- **Data Collection**
  - Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions conducted via telephone & face to face
  - Audio taped & transcribed; content analysis
  - Follow-up interviews at 6 & 12 months (total of 3 interviews)

- **Sample**
  - 7 women, European-American
  - Ages ranged from 48-56, mean 53 years
  - LMP ranged from 4 months to 10 years
  - 2 women less than 1 year; 2 women 1-2 years; 2 women 3 years; 1 woman 10 years

Findings

- **Over the course of a year, 3 women made 2 decisions, 1 woman made 3 decisions, 1 woman made 5 decisions, and 1 woman did not make any decisions.**

- **Women’s basic problem was the need for relief of symptoms in the safest manner possible, and return to their prior level of functioning.**

In order to accomplish these goals they used a process, “Navigating the Waves of Menopausal Changes.” This was a non-linear process with five stages:

- **Noticing changes**
  - Charting an initial course
  - Changing course
  - Consulting the nurse practitioner
  - Taking it as we go

- **Strategies Used During the Process**
  - **Noticing Changes**
    - Information-seeking
  - **Charting an Initial Course**
    - "Holding out" from using HT
    - "Trying it" - using non-hormonal remedies
  - **Judging efficacy**
  - **Changing Course**
    - Weighing benefits and risks
    - Reconciling risks
    - "Keeping things natural" - bioidenticals
  - "It was sort of weighing out the risk and benefit...I may just have to absorb some of the risk in order to feel better."

- **Consulting the NP**
  - "I was just torn, so I needed help with the decision."

- **Taking It As We Go**
  - "Fine-taking regimen."
  - Weighing benefits and risks
  - Changing course again

Findings (cont)

- **Influences on the Process**
  - **Internal:**
    - Presence of symptoms, degree of disruption in function
    - Attitudes and beliefs about menopausal management
    - Perception of quality of life
    - Values and goals
    - Knowledge of menopause & research findings
  - **Perception of Risk**
    - Personal & family health history
    - Context
  - **External:** Interactions with
    - Family, friends, co-workers
    - Cultural group
    - Health care providers
    - Media and information sources

Conclusions

- **Implications for Research**
  - Obtain a larger sample and develop a grounded theory about decision-making, which would guide development of interventions to enhance women’s decision making. These could be tested.

- **Implications for Practice**
  - Health care providers can meet women’s needs for decision support by designing easily accessible and unbiased information about menopause management. Some women prefer one-on-one counseling, some prefer to use the internet, and others prefer a group model. This should be individualized.

  - During counseling clarify the role women want to take in the decision process, and determine their stage in the decision process.

  - Elicit women’s perceptions about their needs and goals, values and beliefs, and perception of risk, beliefs about menopause management, and knowledge about menopause.

![Navigating the Waves of Menopausal Changes](imageurl)