Reviewer's report

Title: Gastrointestinal symptoms before and during menses in healthy women.

Version: 1 Date: 21 March 2013

Reviewer: Monica Jarrett

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The researchers state that little is known about gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms during the pre-menses and menses phase of the menstrual cycle in health control women. This manuscript describes five GI symptoms, psychological symptoms and fatigue in a healthy control group. The healthy controls were originally recruited as a comparison group for a study of women with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) using a cross-sectional design.

A notable limitation of this paper is the use of a recall period over three menstrual cycles and the lack of any measure of severity. Prior research using daily diaries with symptom severity ratings have provided more useful data e.g., mild abdominal pain is not often clinically significant, but percent of time with moderate to severe symptoms often is. I can appreciate the focus on the pre-menses and menses phase, but it is hard to know what that means outside the context of the whole menstrual cycle or at least the other menstrual phases. The use of a design with minimal burden does not equal useful data.

The term emotional or psychological symptoms might be better choice of terms to describe the symptoms of depression, anxiety and ‘other emotional symptoms’ as mood symptoms.