Reviewer's report

Title: Prevalence and severity of menopause symptoms among perimenopausal and postmenopausal women aged 30-49 years in Gulele sub-city of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Version: 0 Date: 22 Dec 2016

Reviewer: Nancy Reame

Reviewer's report:

This report describes some basic characteristics of menopause symptoms in a group of women ages 30-49 years from an urban area of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Although it is important to better characterize the perimenopause experience of women from lower-income, less developed countries, especially in non-westernized regions of the world, there is a lack of clarify as well as several significant methodologic problems in this report in its current form. A list of major problems and omissions, and minor concerns are below.

Major concern:

It appears that this report is a sub-study of a larger national (?) study with the restrictive age range of 30-49. This is a significant methodologic problem if the goal as noted in the intro (page 4, line 12) is to examine menopause symptoms across the perimenopause and postmenopause age range, which commonly extends through the mid-50s. Why this particular "slice" of the data were analyzed for this purpose, given such a shortcoming, requires stronger rationale. Related to this problem, no recruitment methods are provided, no inclusion/exclusion criteria are given. Also, the % of women who did not meet the peri or post definitions is not given.

There are a number of important inconsistencies that make it difficult to evaluate the key findings and their interpretations. For example, the definitions of menopause (line 3, page 2) and premenopause (page 4, line 13) overlap with those used to define perimenopause (page 4, line 12). Please explain these discrepancies.

The data in Table 3 suggest that all symptoms were higher in the Postmenopause group, yet, the discussion reports that psychologic symptoms were higher in the peri group (line 3, page 12). Please clarify and refer to specific tables when reporting these findings.

Typically before comparing two groups on the outcome variables of interest, an analysis is performed of demographic characteristics in each group in order to determine their potential as confounding variables. For eg, were the two peri/post groups similar in age?..education?..ethnicity?..all of these demographics are known to influence menopause symptoms in other
populations. Alternatively, why wasn't a multiple regression performed to provide some insights on your findings?

Also, the authors report that the average age of the sample was 40 yrs, and that the average age of "menopause" was also age 40 (see Conclusion) - a surprising finding well-short of the worldwide average of age 51. In addition, a third of the group was classified as postmenopausal (n=75), yet just 9 were reported to have experienced induced menopause, so how to explain this somewhat high rate in such a young sample? Please clarify.

Other points:

All findings and data tables should be rounded up to just one decimal point or use whatever is the journal's conventional standards.

Descriptive data categories for education status should be subdivided using more conventional groupings. The group "grade 1-University" provides no insight about the median level...or % across the range...a more typical grouping would be: less than high school, high school only, university, The category "able to read and write vs not able" is confusing: does this apply to those below grade 1?

Please explain the ethnic groups presented in Table 1 - without a clear explanation in the legend or text, this information is not helpful for non-African readers. Also how is "orthodox" different from Protestant?..

Why was "loss of interest in sex" used as the menopause symptom to estimate sample size for this study.. is this a particularly culture-specific experience in this region? Ie more so than hot flashes, for eg??

I cannot comment on the appropriateness of the sampling method - an epidemiologist should review this section.

The methodologic limitations described above (especially the upper age limit) should be presented in the discussion. Also, the statement "since only menopausal women were selected for participation, no comparable group exists" is confusing, as other studies have used age-matched cohorts of premenopausal and even male cohorts (as controls) for symptom comparisons.

In its present form there are errors in English grammar and syntax; although understandable, these errors serve to detract from the quality of the work. The authors should seek assistance from an experienced editor
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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I recommend additional statistical review

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