

INTRODUCTION

Menopause is defined as permanent cessation of ovarian function occurring some time before the end of the natural lifespan. In human females, menopause usually happens more or less in midlife, signaling the end of the fertile phase of a woman's life *Soules et al., (2010)*. Menopause is usually defined as the permanent cessation of menstruation, or a time of transition for women, marking the end of reproductive ability and beginning of new phase of life *Pillitteri,(2010) and Fairley,(2009)*.

In present era, with increased life expectancy, women are likely to face long periods of menopause accounting to approximately a third of her life. Menopause is accompanied by biological and psychological changes that affect a women's health and sense of well being. It may be smooth experience for some women with only symptom of cessation of menstrual flow while others face one or more of post menopausal symptoms. *Damondaran et al., (2009)*.

Two hundred years ago, 30% of women lived long enough to reach menopause, whereas 90% of today's women will experience it. Although menopause is not a disease, it is a relatively estrogen-deficient state. Its diagnosed by the findings of at least 6 months of amenorrhea in a woman over age 40years or amenorrhea combined with a FSH level above 40 pg/ml. Normal women experience ovarian failure at a mean age of 51 years, with 95% becoming menopausal between the ages of 45 to 55 years *Marchant,(2005)*.

Every year, million women begin the menopause transition. By year 2030 the world health organization estimates that 1.2 billion women will be age 50 years or over .The life expectancy of women has increased to an average age of 81 years. This means that most women

can expect to live another third of their lives after menopause **Hitchcock and Thomas, (2003)**. There were an estimated 467 million women aged ≥ 50 years in the world in 1990 this number is expected to increase to 1200 million by the year 2030. In the year 2000 women aged ≥ 50 years constituted 14.03% of the female population. It will rise to 20.9% of the female population by the year 2025. This suggests increase in the proportion of postmenopausal women in the future **World health organization (WHO, 2005)**.

The age range at which menopause occurs is wide, between approximately 40 and 55 years of age with mean age of 51.3 **Pillitteri, (2010)**. The age at which menopause symptoms begins appears to be not associated with age of menarche **Baram & Basson, (2007)**. At menopause 60% of women are relatively asymptomatic, 25% have mild symptoms and 15% have moderate to severe symptoms. The most common symptoms of menopause are physiologic symptoms as hot flashes, vaginal dryness, urinary incontinence and psychological symptoms as mood swings, nervousness, anxiety, irritability and depression **Fairley, (2009)**.

There are four stages of menopause: peri menopause is the term describing the menopause transition years, the years both before and after the final period. Premenopause is a word used to describe the years leading up to the last period, when the levels of reproductive hormones lower, and the effects of hormone withdrawal may be present. Menopause is defined as the day after a woman's final period finishes. At this point a woman is considered to be a year into post menopause, is considered to be infertile, and no longer needs to take into consideration the possibility of pregnancy. Post menopause is all of the time in a woman's life that

take place after her last period, determined once she has gone 12 full months with no flow at all **Freeman,(2010)**.

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) has become a hot issue for discussion among women in their forties and fifties .Hormone replacement therapy is the use of synthetic or natural female hormones to make up for the decline or lack of natural hormones produced in a woman's body **Harcourt, (2010)**. The decision to take HRT is a personal one for most women with conflicting advice often being offered by doctors, nurses, friends and medical staff. Health professionals must give accurate and update information to menopausal women so that they can make an informed choice for themselves **Ganger and Key, (2005)**.

(HRT) including estrogen only and compound estrogen – progesterone combinations for treatment of menopausal symptoms .such as hot flushes, urogenital atrophy lower rate of health consequences such as osteoporosis and Cardio vascular disease (CVD) **Lud, (2008)**.Its come in several different forms, including tablets, stick-on patches, injections, and creams that are worn inside the vagina. **Ritenbaugh, (2008)**.

Although (HRT) is mainly used to relieve menopausal symptoms, it has shown benefits in several chronic diseases such as osteoporosis, colorectal cancer, and depression. It may also have a protective role in dementia and cognitive decline in postmenopausal women. HRT is also associated with an increased risk of breast cancer, stroke, and venous thromboembolism **Hogervorst et al., (2004)** Contraindications to estrogen therapy are undiagnosed vaginal bleeding, severe liver disease, pregnancy, venous thrombosis, personal history of breast cancer and early endometrial cancer. .Adverse effects of replacement therapy may include

bloating, mastodynia, vaginal bleeding, and headaches *Stampfer et al., (2007)*.

The nursing care of menopause should focus on helping women to understand the physical and psychological changes that may occur during menopause also the nurse must make comprehensive assessment of women's experience related to menopause stage .This can facilitate informed decision making regarding any actions that woman wishes to take to promote a healthy lifestyle. If the women choose hormone therapy nurses must reinforce the prescribed regimens as well as the risks and benefits of the therapy. The women should tell that although hormone replacement therapy effectively treats atrophic vaginitis and reduces dyspareunia, it may not correct the loss of libido that some women experience *Ashwill, (2009) and Orshan &Matteers (2008)*.

Significance of the Study

Menopause is gaining an increase attention because of the growing emphasis on women rights as well as the increase in the life expectancy of women resulting in an increase in the number of women attaining the age of menopause *Khamis, (2005)*. With increasing life expectancy, menopause become important issue among women's health, the age of menopausal women in Egypt population in the life stage (45-49years) as 1,764,560 and in the life stage (50-54) as 1,336,410 and total population of all women is 36,913,000 *WHO, (2005)*. Additionally 20 million of women world wide use hormone replacement therapy *Tormey, (2006)*.

So the study held to assess knowledge and attitude of menopausal women regarding hormone replacement therapy.