The Survey on Korean Menopausal Women’s Behavior and Perception of Hormone Therapy

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=Abstract=

Objectives: After Women’s Health Initiative (WHI) study had been published, the use of hormone therapy (HT) have been decreasing even though it is the most effective therapy for menopausal symptom. The survey was conducted to investigate Korean menopausal women’s perception of HT and behavior when they are treated by HT.

Methods: During 4 weeks from September 2009 to October 2009, total 600 women aged 45 ~ 64 participated in the survey by face to face interview. Out of answering women, women who have visited clinic/hospital at least 1 time to treat their menopausal symptom during last 1 year were included. One hundred fifty women for each age group, 45 ~ 49, 50 ~ 54, 55 ~ 59 and 60 ~ 64, were recruited in consecutive order.

Results: Eighty percent women who have visited clinic/hospital to treat menopausal symptom, visited obstetrics and gynecology. Only 16% of these women were current user, and other 84% of these women had no experience of HT (53%) or stopped therapy (31%). Among current user, only 9% of women have used HT more than 5 years. Eighty percent of current user had used HT less than 2 years. Most distressing menopausal symptom is ‘hot flush’ regardless HT experience. When doctor recommend HT, 72% of patients accept HT in overall. Among women who had no experience of HT, the most common reason of not to take HT was concern of side effects (51%). And 67% of women who had concern of side effects worried about cancer incidence.

Conclusion: Many women with menopausal symptom do not take HT even though it is the most effective therapy. Most of women who take HT stop treatment within 1 year. Most common reason of not to take HT is concern about side effect, increasing incidence of cancer related to HT. Therefore, HT should be considered to short-term relief of menopausal symptoms and at the minimal dose, if possible. (J Korean Soc Menopause 2011;17:142-149)

Key Words: Hormone therapy, Menopause, Perception

Hormone therapy (HT) for menopause is known as it alleviates vasomotor symptoms as well as mental, psychological symptoms that are experienced after the menopause, and as it manifests effects of preventing urogenital atrophy and protecting the bones and the cardiovascular system. It also has many benefits for the health of menopausal women as it owns beneficial effects on dementia or colorectal cancer. However, as a negative results of study on the secondary prevention of cardiovascular diseases by the Heart and Estrogen/progestin Replacement Study (HERS) in 1998 and as the risks for coronary disease, breast cancer and stroke came to the fore by the Women’s Health Initiative (WHI) in 2002, the use of hormone for 2003 was reduced by 28% in comparison to the prior year in USA. Moreover, with the results of Million Women Study (MWS) being reported together with aforementioned study, there had been many debates on the HT for the post-menopausal women as its risks were more magnified than its benefits. However, WHI study or HERS study was conducted in
the subjects whose mean ages were 63 and 67, who were more than 10 years from menopause, and in particular, HERS study had its limitation as it was conducted in the aged women with coronary diseases, those results could not be applied to all menopausal women. Therefore, in reality, HT was recommended as primary treatment for vasomotor symptoms with short-term use as possible.

After WHI study had been published, the use of HT have been decreased even though it has many advantages effective therapy for menopausal symptoms due to the conversion of perception on the HT. Also the use of HT has been decreased with reasons like worries on breast cancer and abnormal vaginal bleeding, many women had rejected the HT itself or stopped its use. To this end, this survey was conducted to investigate Korean menopausal women’s response to perception of HT and their behaviors in women who had visited the hospital because of menopausal symptom.

### Materials and Methods

This study was conducted in women whose ages were ranged being 45~64 who had visited the hospital to treat menopausal symptoms during 4 weeks from September 2009 to October 2009 through inquiries. The regions subjected to this study were Seoul, Gyeonggi-do, Incheon, Busan, Daejon, Daegu and Gwangju and the inquiries were made by face to face interview within 30 minutes performed in total 600 women aged 45~64 participated in the survey. The contents of inquiries were categorized largely into the menopausal symptoms and perception on them, treatment of menopausal symptoms and whether to visit the hospital, and HT for women and perception on it. Among the women who had visited the hospital, women younger than 45 as well as older than 65 years were excluded from the study subjects. And such inquiries were performed to the women experienced menopausal symptoms among those who were diagnosed as menopause from the hospital. The study was performed in total 600 women who were categorized into 4 groups by the age ranges into 45~49 group, 50~54 group, 55~59 group, and 60~64 group with 150 women for each group respectively. Out of answering women, residents of Seoul, Gyeonggi-do and Incheon was 71% while residents in Busan was 13% and 8% was from Daegu, and the residents in Daejon and Gwangju were 4% respectively. Sixty four percent of responders were full time housewives, 23% was self-business owner, 9% was employees of service business, 2% as office worker and 2% was skilled workers. As the academic background, 64% was high school graduate, 19% with junior high school graduate, 13% with university graduates and 5% with elementary graduates.

### Results

The mean age of subjects in this study for investigation was 54 years old and the mean menopausal age was 60 years old. Forty-six percent of subject women had visited the hospital after experiencing menopausal symptoms within 1~3 months. Among the types of hospital for initial visits, 62% of them had visited private obstetrics and gynecology clinics as the most followed by 18% who visited to department of obstetrics and gynecology of the general hospitals, 12% visited the private internal medicine clinics and 4% to the private family medicine clinics. The private obstetrics and gynecology clinics had the most frequent visits of patients followed by the obstetrics and gynecology department in the general hospital, but such sequence had no association with ages or to the HT. As the main reason to visit the hospital, worries on any presence of abnormality in their health was the biggest one with 39%, and the symptoms severe enough to impair routine daily living was 20%, intolerable symptoms causing discomforts was 17% and 12% had visited the hospital by the recommendation from associates, and 6% was the cases who had visited the hospital for health examination.

All women experienced menopausal symptoms and the most frequently experienced symptom was ‘hot flush’ with responses from 91% patients. Subsequent to the hot flush, the patients complained cold sweat, palpitation, depression, fatigue, myalgia/arthralgia pain, insomnia, sensory abnormality, frequent urination, memory impairments and sexual dysfunction in sequential order. In particular, 68% of patients complained severe hot flush with painfulness as the most frequently complained distressing menopausal symptom than any other symptoms, and there were many patients who felt this symptoms required treatment as 72%. The older patients had shown many profiles of experiencing hot flush, cold sweat, palpitation, fatigue, and memory impairments. And there were many patients showing profiles in the age group ranged being 60~64 more