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Menopause:

Women's Knowledge Sources

And

Management Decisions

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in Nursing at Massey University by
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Abstract

During the last two decades the topic of menopause has become more openly discussed as evidenced by the prevalence of items in the popular press as well as research done by health professionals. The information that is published in the popular press is largely orientated towards menopause being a disease and the pharmaceutical interventions needed to correct the disease. Literature published in medical and nursing journals is also predominantly orientated toward menopause being a state of oestrogen deficiency. Increasingly though, nurse researchers and feminist writers are challenging these views of menopause. However, information about menopause is not as openly available as women want it to be.

The aim of this research is to discover how women gain knowledge about menopause and how women make decisions about 'managing' their menopause. In this study knowledge is defined as being more than information. Knowledge is the understanding that occurs from the synthesis of all data, about menopause, collected from various sources. It is from the responses of the participants when they are interviewed, and the data analysis using grounded theory that these questions were answered.

The population for the study was women aged between 45-55 years of age. They were recruited from my local community via a newspaper advertisement. The sample group included eleven women.

The methodology used in this research was Grounded Theory as developed by Glaser and Strauss. Ethical approval was gained from the Massey University Ethics Committee and the Central Health Regional Authority as well as from the participants. The participants were all interviewed once, with two participants being consulted for comment on the findings. The interviews were taped and transcribed. Data collection and analysis occurred concurrently as prescribed by grounded theory. Categories were generated from the data.

A descriptive model is presented. This model illustrates that women who have a tertiary level of knowledge and support have the intrinsic qualities needed to be seekers of knowledge about menopause. This group of women, the large majority of the participants, was able to be self-controlling of their own menopause. One of the greatest determinants in being self-controlling was the level of support that women had. A few participants had their menopause controlled by others. However, once adverse effects from the management interventions were experienced, they then gained the abilities to develop partial control of their own menopause.

This study has highlighted that it is important for nurses to take every opportunity to educate women about their health as in this study nurses were not seen as possible sources of education about menopause. Limitations of the study as well as recommendations for nursing research, nursing education and future research are included.

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