Original Article

Epidemiological correlates of postmenopausal bleeding in a tertiary care hospital

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Abstract

Background: A woman is considered menopausal after 12 months of amenorrhea. The most feared symptom during menopause is postmenopausal bleeding which unless proved otherwise indicates genital malignancy.

Objectives: To study Socio-demographic factors related to postmenopausal bleeding and to find time lapse between bleeding and reporting of these cases.

Material and Methods: This cross sectional was done in the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Pt. J. N. M. Medical College & DR. B. R. Ambedkar Memorial, Hospital, Raipur (C. G.) The participants were 146 women who came with the complaint of postmenopausal bleeding. A detailed, preceded, pre-tested, structured, close ended questionnaire was used to collect the data. By interviewing these women, information was collected about different demographic factors like age, socio-economic status, parity etc. The collected data was put in the master chart and analyzed.

Results: The proportion of postmenopausal bleeding cases was 3.5% .Maximum cases(50%) with postmenopausal bleeding were found in the age group of 45-54yrs . 60 % of patients were from rural areas and 62% were illiterate. 65% of the patients were grand multipara (Parity $\geq$ 4). Most of the patients belonged to lower socioeconomic strata. Almost half (48%) of patients presented after, more than 6 months since the first episode of bleeding .

Conclusions: The proportion of postmenopausal bleeding is high, requiring immediate investigation. Lack of awareness led to very late presentation of most of the patients, so education at community level is required to reduce this time lapse for earlier diagnosis and management

Key words: Postmenopausal bleeding, proportion

Introduction:

Menopause is a retrospective term .A woman is considered menopausal after 12 months of amenorrhea. Vaginal bleeding any time after 12 months of amenorrhea in a woman of menopausal age is known as postmenopausal bleeding[1] or 6 months according to some[2] . The Menopause is a biological phenomenon in the process of ovarian ageing which occurs around the age of 50. Average age of menopause is approximately 51.4 years[3] . In India it varies between 45-50 years[4] .The loss of ovarian follicular activity causes a marked fall in the secretion of estrogen, progesterone and other hormones by the ovary so that the cyclical endometrial development and hence the menstruation cease. Deficiency of estrogen begins with its own specific long term degenerative consequences and increased susceptibility for genital malignancies. There is a basic level of information which all women need so that they can interpret any symptom they experience and seek advice to lead healthy lives. The most feared symptom is one of postmenopausal bleeding which unless proved otherwise indicates genital malignancy. If the community at large could be made to realize this single fact, more women could be brought to treatment relatively early and many more cures could be affected. In the present study we made an attempt to find out proportion of cases presenting, with the ominous symptom of postmenopausal bleeding, its relation of socio-demographic factors and time lapse between bleeding and reporting of these cases.

Material and Methods:

The cases in present study were the women of menopausal age with vaginal bleeding or blood stained vaginal discharge at any time after 12 months of amenorrhea, who attended the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Dr. B.R.A.M. Hospital, Raipur (C.G) .Ethical approval was

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obtained. The study continued for about 1 year. Total 4111 patients attended Gyneacology OPD; out of which 146 patients of menopausal age came with the complaint of vaginal bleeding after twelve months or more period of amenorrhea. A detailed, precoded, pre-tested, structured, close ended questionnaire was used to collect the data after informed consent was obtained. By interviewing these women, information was collected about different demographic factors like age, socioeconomic status, parity etc. The collected data was put in the master chart. They were grouped and tabulated according to the various criteria and results were analyzed. The cases were investigated further.

Results:

During our study, 4111 patients attended Gynaecology OPD out of which 146 patients of menopausal age came with the complain of vaginal bleeding after twelve months or more period of amenorrhoea . The proportion of cases of postmenopausal bleeding was found to be 3.5%.

Table 2

Interval between bleeding and reporting of postmenopausal cases

Interval between bleeding and reporting	percent
< 1 week	8
1 week -1 month	18
1month-6 month	26
6-12 months	26
>1 year	22

In the present study (table1) maximum no. of cases with postmenopausal bleeding were found in the age group of 45-54yrs (50%). Next to this, was age group of 55-64yrs (29 %). The youngest patient was of 42years and the oldest patient was of 80years. Average age of the patients was 55 yrs (S.D. 8.9).

60 % of total cases came from rural area. Most of the patients were illiterate accounting for 62% of total cases. 22% of the total cases were educated up to primary school. Only one patient was postgraduate.65% of the patients were grand

Table 1

Socio- demographic characteristics of the postmenopausal bleeding cases

Socio- demographic	
Age Distribution (In years)	
<45	2
45-54	50
55-64	29
65-74	13
>75	6
Participants education	
Illiterate	62
Primary	22
Middle	1
Higher secondary	4
Graduates and above	1
Residence	
Rural	60
Urban	40
Parity	
Nulliparous	2
Uniparous	1
Multiparous	32
Grand multiparous	65
Class (Prasad's)	
I	-
II	-
III	20
IV	48
V	32

multipara (Parity≥4). Rests were multipara (32%). Only two patients were nullipara and one patient was uniparous. Most of the patients belonged to lower socioeconomic strata. 48% of cases were of Prasad's class IV(Table 1)

48% presented after 6 months of first episode of bleeding. Only 8% sought medical advice within a week (Table 2) .Duration of bleeding had a vast range (4 days to 18 months).

The interval between the menopause and the first episode of postmenopausal bleeding varied from 1yr to 25yrs .24% of patients bled within 2yrs of menopause. Rest had a clear span of more than 2yrs.

Discussion:

In our study patients presenting with postmenopausal bleeding comprised of 3.5% of all gynaecology outpatient attendance which is quiet substantial and is in accordance with reported 4.1%[5] and 5%[6,7] .With an ageing population and an increase in life expectancy, larger proportion of female population will be in postmenopausal age group. The cases with postmenopausal bleeding are thus expected to rise.

Age of the patients ranged from 42yrs to 80yrs with an average of 55yrs (S.D. 8.9) which is lower than the other reports[8,9] . The highest incidence of cases was between 45-54yrs after which it declined with increasing age. This is in comparison with the study by Gredmark T et al[10] who found the incidence of Postmenopausal bleeding to be 14.6% at the age of less than 50yrs, decreasing gradually to 1.7% at the age of more than 80yrs.

Uneducated (62% were illiterate), rural (60%) population made the major proportion of our study group. Lack of awareness may lead to ignorance of spotting or staining after the menopause with the result of presentation after long period.

We found multiparty to be a high risk factor for postmenopausal bleeding. 65% of cases were grandmultipara and 32% of cases were multipara comparable to 66% grandmultipara, 24% with parity 1-3 and 18% nulliparous patients in the study done by K Jillani[11] .

The most disturbing feature of the study is that almost half (48%) of patients presented after more than 6 months since the first episode of bleeding, much later than the reported time lapse of 19.2 weeks in a study done by Samartzis S[5] . Only 8% sought medical advice within a week. Most of the delays could be due to patient's procrastination, indifference or ignorance and lack of awareness.

Conclusions:

The proportion of postmenopausal bleeding cases is high (3.5%), requiring immediate investigation of this symptom .With increase in the life expectancy, cases with postmenopausal bleeding is expected to increase hence there is an urgent need of basic level of information for all women so that they can interpret any symptom they experience and seek medical advice. Awareness at community level can only reduce this time lapse leading to earlier diagnosis and management

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