

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This descriptive research was to examine menopausal symptoms and health practices among middle aged Thai Muslim women. The subjects were 366 middle aged Muslim women, living in Amphur Chana, Songkla province. The subjects were selected by convenient sampling. Interview forms were used to collect demographic data, health history data, menstrual and sexual data, menopausal symptoms, and health practices.

The SPSS program was used to establish the frequency, mean, standard deviation, range and skewness. Independent sample t-test, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient were also used to analyze the data.

The results showed that the top ten menopausal symptoms reported as "often & almost always" in the subjects included back pain (22.7%), loss of feeling in hands and feet (18.0%), early morning awakening (13.2%), difficulty falling asleep (12.3%), weight gain (12.3%), irritability (12.3), hot flushes (11.8%), numbness and tingling (11.8%), headache (11.8%) and ache in the back of neck and skull (11.8%). The frequency and severity of menopausal symptoms were linked in 8 out of 10 symptoms. However, the mean percentage of severity was lower than frequency (5.2-12%).

Pre-perimenopausal subjects had a significantly significantly higher of menopausal symptoms frequency mean score with regard to general- somatic, vaso-somatic, and psychological symptoms as compared to the postmenopausal group. In terms of severity of symptoms, higher mean scores on general-somatic and vaso-

somatic symptoms were found in pre-perimenopausal subjects, however there was no significant differences of psychological symptoms between these two groups.

The overall health practices of the two groups' were not different ($p > 0.05$), and when looking through each dimension, it was found that stress management, elimination practices, and general responsibility for health of pre-perimenopausal women was significance higher than postmenopausal women. In addition, there was a negative relationship of menopausal frequency, and menopausal severity with health practices ($p < 0.01$), $r = -.293$ and $-.174$, respectively

From these findings it could be said that the prevalence of menopausal symptoms among middle aged Thai Muslim women was lower than other middle aged Thai women. All the findings reinforce the idea that Muslim's women belief in menopause as a natural life event may minimise their symptoms. However, this study only the symptoms that reported the frequency as "often to almost always" and the severity as "moderate to severe" so the percentage of the subjects may be lower than that reported in other studies..

The overall health practices of these subjects was at fair level and the practices regarding exercise and general responsibility for health were poor. It seems that most of the subjects did not pay enough attention to their health as well as health practices. Working with middle aged Muslim women, health personel need to assess their menopausal symptoms and health practices. Encouragement of positive health practices particularly is regard to back pain care and self-examination is essential.

Implications and recommendations

The implications for nursing practices

The findings of this study suggest that the frequency and severity of overall menopausal symptoms in these subjects were at a low level. However, the most frequent symptoms such as back pain, sleep disruption, and sexual problems were assessed as problems. Health practices related to exercise and general responsibility to health should be assessed and encouraged to prevent the long term sequences of menopausal symptoms as well as to relieve the severity of symptoms. Nurses should recognize common symptoms among menopausal women and give advice to them on how to deal with these problems. Pre- perimenopausal women could be reminded that menopausal symptoms are temporary and will eventually be relieved. However, they do need to have good health practices to prevent the long term consequences of menopausal symptoms.

The implications and recommendations for nursing education

The findings from this study provide evidence for nurse educators to educate the nursing students in ways to reduce the frequency and severity of menopausal symptoms in menopausal women.

The health practices of exercise and general responsibility for health were poor. The nurse as well as the health care provider should emphasize to the subjects the benefits of good health practices, for example, sleep problems can be reduced by appropriate exercises and relieving stress, back pain can be reduced by improving posture, lifting or bending, and doing specific exercises. Informing the premenopausal subjects that vasomotor symptoms will reduce after menopause and

that, without good health practices, other diseases such as osteoporosis and heart disease might increase.

The implications and recommendations for nursing research

This study provides evidence of the frequency and severity of back pain but whether this is due to menopause, the type of occupation or lack of exercise is unclear. Studies on the most effective ways of promoting exercise, regular Pap smears, and self-breast examination to this group would be appropriate. Moreover, more research could be done concerning menopause symptoms, for example; comparing the menopausal symptoms between different occupations or different lifestyles, comparing the menopausal symptoms between women who do or do not prepare themselves for the menopausal period, comparing the health practices between women with active symptoms and women with no symptoms, and qualitative studies of the attitude of Muslim women toward menopause.