THE UTILIZATION OF HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY FOR MENOPAUSE: A COMMUNITY-BASED STUDY IN URBAN WUHAN, CHINA

WANG FANG

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This is a cross-sectional study aimed to explore how women view menopause and HRT, why they use or don’t use HRT for menopause, and how the psychosocial factors affect current use of HRT among menopausal women. This is a quantitative study complemented with qualitative method (focus group discussions). Three communities in the urban area of Wuhan City, China are the subject of this study and the target population is women aged 40 to 60 years old who currently use or do not use HRT.

It was found that most women have some menopausal symptoms. Women who are 50 to 54 years old, post-menopausal, with higher SES, no child living together and healthier life style are more likely to be HRT current users. Relieving symptoms and following doctors’ suggestions are the two most important reasons for starting HRT. However, unawareness of HRT and women’s belief that menopause is a natural process and there is no need to use medicine are the most two important reasons for never having used HRT.

Current users are inclined to view menopause as a medical condition and have a positive attitude toward HRT. However, most of the non-current users view menopause as a natural process and have a negative attitude toward HRT. For most current users, they received the recommendation to use HRT from doctors before they decided to use HRT. It was found from both quantitative and qualitative researches that women’s perceived susceptibility and severity are not important factors in determining women’s current use of HRT.

Results based on logistic regression analysis showed that six variables were found to have effects on women's current use of HRT. Four variables, namely, social influences of using HRT, perceived advantages outweigh disadvantages of HRT, perceived need of treatment for symptoms and knowledge level about HRT, had positive effects, while the other two variables, perceived values towards old age and perceived effectiveness of alternative approaches had negative effects.

Based on the findings, several recommendations are made in order to design and provide appropriate health programs for menopausal women and for further research. These recommendations include providing more information to women, improving health education, increasing support to menopausal women, developing self-help groups among menopausal women, enhancing doctors’ understanding on women’s ideas, promoting alternative services in hospital or other health facilities and women’s informed choices of using HRT. Recommendations for further research include views on this subject from the perspective of the health-care providers, as well as socio-economic factors which can be explored.