

EP24.08

Menopausal symptoms: development and dimensionality of the MenoScores Questionnaire (MSQ)

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Background: Hot flushes and night sweats are common menopausal symptoms. Some women also experience emotional vulnerability, sleeping problems, fatigue, pains, problems with concentration, vaginal dryness and loss of sexual desire. The report of menopausal symptoms differs among different cultures and ethnic groups but also between individuals within a homogenous population. Therefore, measuring menopausal symptoms is a challenge and so is distinguishing between symptoms actually caused by the menopause and symptoms caused by normal aging or other life circumstances. No Danish instruments measuring menopausal symptoms validated using Rasch models exist. **Aim:** To develop a questionnaire with high content validity measuring menopausal symptoms and validate this questionnaire using Rasch models.

Method: Through a literature review, focus-groups, single-interviews and pilot testing a draft version of the questionnaire was generated. This draft version was tested in a cross-sectional study and the collected data were analysed using Rasch models.

Results: The draft version of the questionnaire encompassed 126 items covering eight domains plus one global item asking if the women in general were bothered by menopausal symptoms. 1504 women, aged 45-65 years, responded to this draft questionnaire. 71.3% of these responders replied to be bothered to some extent by menopausal symptoms. The psychometric analysis resulted in a multidimensional questionnaire named “the MenoScores questionnaire (MSQ)” encompassing 11 unidimensional scales and 1 single item; in total 60 items. The scales measuring “hot flushes”, “day and night sweats” and “menopausal specific sleeping problems” performed best in discriminating between the response categories of the global item.

Conclusions: Menopausal symptoms are multidimensional and only few of these constructs are unquestionably related to the physiological menopause. Many other symptoms are more likely caused by aging or other life circumstances. MSQ is a new validated instrument that can be used to measure menopausal symptoms.