Median age at menopause in a rural population of western Kenya.

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Abstract:

This was a cross sectional descriptive study to discuss the median age of menopause in a rural area of Western Kenya. The broad objective of the study was to describe the demographic and biophysical characteristics of the study population and determine the age of menopause. A review of the current and medieval records shows average age of menopause has remained relatively constant at 50 years in contrast to the receding age of menarche. A total of 1078 women aged between 40-60 years were interviewed. The majority (98.8%) were from one ethnic group, the Luhya. Of the 1078 women, 880 (81.4%) were married and 198 (18.6%) were single. The average number of children per woman was 7.74. Most of the women (75.1%) had attained primary school education. Their husbands were unskilled workers in 30.1% of the cases. The mean weight and height of the women was 60.74 kg and 161.1 cm respectively. Using methods of probit analysis, the median and modal age of menopause was found to be 48.28 years in this group of western Kenya women. If generalised for the whole country, these results suggest that an average Kenyan woman lives for over ten years beyond menopause. It is recommended that more attention should be given to the special health problems of postmenopausal population.

PIP: This study describes the demographic and biophysical characteristics of rural menopausal women in Western Kenya. Menopause occurs as the gradual unresponsiveness of the human ovary to gonadotropins, premature ovarian failure at under 40 years, and menopause following surgical procedures of the uterus and ovaries. A 3-phase process starts with low serum estradiol and progesterone, followed by a rise in follicle stimulating hormone, and a rise in luteinizing hormone. Clinical symptoms include vasomotor ones, genitourinary ones, osteoporosis and increased incidence of bone fractures, increased incidence of thromboembolic and ischemic heart disease, and psychological symptoms of anxiety, depression, and memory loss. The age of menopause varies with socioeconomic conditions, race, parity, height, weight, skinfold thickness, lifestyle, and education. Data were obtained for this study from a sample of 1078 women from 7 sublocations in Vihiga division, Kenya. Women were aged 40-60 years. The most populous ethnic group was the Luhya. 81.6% were married, 15.6% were widowed, and 0.7% were divorced. 4 women had never been married. 75.1% had a primary school education; 18.6% had not received any formal education. 30.1% had husbands who were unskilled workers, 28.8% had husbands who were farmers, and 20.6% had husbands who were skilled workers. 1.3% had no children, and 1 woman had 17 children. The average number of children was 7.74. 9 of the nulliparous women were menopausal. The mean height was 161.1 cm. The median age at menopause was 48.28 years. Almost all women were menopausal by 55 years. The total fertility period averaged 35 years. Female life expectancy was 59 years.