Behaviors/Attitudes Towards Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT): Treatment for Menopausal Women in 5 Major European Countries

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Introduction

- Menopausal symptoms are common and bothersome to many women, yet are often untreated
- Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) can treat menopausal symptoms, but HRT use significantly dropped following reports of previously unidentified risks with oral HRT: the Women’s Health Initiative and the Million Women Study4
- Menopause-related consultations with general practitioners (GPs) fell from 18% to 10% between 1996 and 20055
- More than 60% of women in 2012 managed their menopausal symptoms without healthcare professionals (HCPs), often through social support and advice from friends, family and the internet6
- Some attitudes toward HRT may be changing in favor of considering HRT
- A 2009 survey of 720 postmenopausal Italian women found that 68% believed HRT was a good solution to menopausal symptoms*

Objective

To assess behaviors toward treatment of symptoms associated with menopause across 5 European countries

Methods

- A July 2014 market research survey (AX’s Consulting) assessed menopausal symptoms and treatment in a nationally represented population of 2610 women in 5 major European countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom)
- An Internet survey, consisting of a screening section (8 questions) and a main survey (15 questions), was administered to postmenopausal women. The sample completing the full survey was equally stratified by the age groups of 45-54 yrs, 55-64 yrs, and ≥65 yrs.

Results

A total of 3890 postmenopausal women were screened for the survey, 2610 of these women had symptoms related to menopause, and 1401 postmenopausal women completed the full survey, answering all questions regarding treatment (Table 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total menopausal population screened (n=2610)</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menopausal women with symptoms related to menopause (n=1401)</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women completing full survey* (n=1401)</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>413</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- 70% of women reported having or have had menopausal symptoms
- 50%-55% of women took action for treating their menopausal symptoms, with approximately 75% of those taking action consulting a physician
- Of those who saw a physician, approximately 80% received either HRT or another prescription treatment in 4 countries (Germany, France, the UK and Italy); 69% in Spain

In Germany and Spain, prescription treatment represented ~25%-30% of treatments and ~33% in the other countries

Figure 1. Proportion of different treatments used by women in 5 different countries

- Of women who saw a physician, many did not receive HRT because the physician advised against it or the option was not discussed (Figure 4)
- Among German women who saw a doctor, patient refusal was a common reason for not using HRT (44% of women not taking HRT vs ~20% in other countries; Figure 4)
- In Spain, the option of HRT was more often not raised than in the other countries (Figure 4)

Figure 4. Reported reasons why women did not receive HRT

- Women from the UK were most familiar with and favorable to HRT, particularly in Italy, France, Germany, and Spain (Figure 5)
- A significant proportion of women not taking HRT were unfavorable to HRT, particularly in Italy, France, Germany, and Spain (Figure 5)
- Of women who saw a physician, many did not receive HRT because the physician advised against it or the option was not discussed (Figure 4)
- Among German women who saw a doctor, patient refusal was a common reason for not using HRT (44% of women not taking HRT vs ~20% in other countries; Figure 4)
- In Spain, the option of HRT was more often not raised than in the other countries (Figure 4)

Limitations

- Although a national population was sought, the population of surveyed women may not be representative of the national population in each country
- The survey did not include questions regarding some demographics or behaviors that might have affected women’s experience of menopausal symptoms
- Although the sample for each country was equally stratified by age group, the low response for Spanish women over 65 reporting symptoms reduced the percentage of women in that group, making comparisons across countries for that group difficult

Conclusions

- This survey of women in 5 European countries showed
- Prescription HRT was only used by 25%-33% of symptomatic women
- Younger women used non-HRT options more commonly than older women
- For those using HRT, physicians were commonly the initiator for suggesting HRT, but for non-HRT users, physicians commonly advised against HRT or did not bring it up
- Women in the UK were most familiar with and favorable to HRT, those in Spain, France and Germany tended to be unfavorable
- A high proportion of women in Spain and France considered hormones to be dangerous, while women in the UK did not
- Women’s interest in a new HRT is relatively high, 34%-50%
- In summary, one quarter to one-third of surveyed symptomatic women used HRT to treat their menopausal symptoms. Older women tended to use HRT more than younger women. Women from the UK were most familiar with and favorable to HRT. Most women using HRT were advised by a physician to initiate treatment, or came to a mutual decision with their physician. Interest in a new hormone therapy was higher than the current rate of usage.

References


Figure 2. Types of therapies used to treat menopausal symptoms in women of different age groups in 5 different countries

Figure 3. Origin of HRT prescriptions for postmenopausal women in 5 countries

Figure 5. Women's attitudes (familiar with; favorable toward) regarding HRT depending on their treatment at the time of the survey

Figure 6. Percentage of women in each country who agreed that hormones are dangerous

Figure 7. Percentage of women willing to adopt a new hormone therapy

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