The Growing Menopause Conversation

By Claudia Butjerevic

It is the reverse of puberty.

Half of the world will typically enter menopause in the mid-point of their lives, however many women are unaware of what they are experiencing.

Dr Linda Dear, a menopause specialist, recently conducted a survey in New Zealand, which found that around 64% of NZ women did not know that the symptoms they were experiencing were caused by menopause. Dr Dear is currently collecting results from Australian women who undertook the same survey.

Symptoms of menopause stretch far, and affect every woman differently, as no one woman is the same. Symptoms range from physical to psychological, including sleep issues, weight gain, night sweats, migraines, hot flushes, memory problems, concentration problems, anxiety, mood swings, and loss of confidence, among a host of others.

'[Menopause] is really gaining traction in the last few years, there are a lot more people talking about it,' says Anja Lineen, a Menopause Coach and Menopause Friendly Australia Facilitator based on the North Shore. 'So many women don't even know what the symptoms are. Brain fog, for example, they might think they have early onset dementia. Quite often, it's menopause.'

Media traction for the menopause conversation is, as public focus tends to, resulting in some conflicting opinions and controversaries. Jean Hailes for Women's Health, a national not-for-profit organisation, recently released a report from their 2023 National Women's Health Survey which was conducted with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.

The report states that media coverage about menopause is not based on strong evidence and is not adequately sampling women and their menopausal experiences, leading to skewed data.

'Unfortunately, there are powerful commercial incentives to create a 'menopause problem' in the minds of Australian women and Australian employers that can be 'fixed' by the purchase of goods and services,' reads the report. 'We caution all parties to avoid 'catastrophising' menopause in the framing of public discussions and particularly in the advertising of goods and services.'

Anja and Menopause Friendly Australia are aiming to implement menopause awareness in the workplace, to ensure women are able to continue with their daily lives despite the hormonal transition. The release of Jean Hailes' report is sparking concerns among menopause advocates.

'The report itself notes that the results cannot be relied upon,' says Grace Molloy, CEO of Menopause Friendly Australia. 'I question why government funding has been put towards the creation of research that is completely useless and potentially damaging. Three in four women experience symptoms and we don't leave these at the door when we go to work.'

Anja Lineen is holding a menopause workshop on the 5th of November. More information can be found at www.bendityoga.com.au/event-details/menopause-workshop-1

To view Dr Linda Dear's New Zealand survey results, visit www.menodoctor.com/nzsurvey

Dr Dear's Australian results will be available shortly.

To view the Jean Hailes report, visit www.jeanhailes.org.au/research/womens-health-survey