

Dysmenorrhea and Its Effects on Women

Literature Review

Kelsey Reardon

Lakeview College of Nursing

## DYSMENORRHEA AND ITS EFFECTS ON WOMEN

### **Dysmenorrhea and Its Effects on Women**

Dysmenorrhea is the medical term for pain with menstruation, including two types of dysmenorrhea: primary and secondary (Cleveland Clinic, 2018). Dysmenorrhea is more common than most people realize. It is the most commonly reported menstrual disorder. More than one-half of women who menstruate have some pain for 1–2 days each month (Acog.org, 2015). It affects women of all ages, starting at as young as adolescents who are just beginning their menstrual cycle and ending with those women who are about to enter the menopause stage. It is essential for nurses to know the causes and effects of Dysmenorrhea to help treat their patients. In this paper, we will look at a few articles and research studies about dysmenorrhea in women, along with the causes, effects, and treatments used, in hopes of learning more about this real and impactful disorder on women.

#### **What women say about their dysmenorrhea: a qualitative thematic analysis**

The purpose of this article is to create a study to help describe different women's thoughts about their experiences with suffering from dysmenorrhea. There are two types of dysmenorrhea that affect women: primary and secondary. Primary dysmenorrhea is the presence of pain in the absences of underlying pathological findings, and secondary dysmenorrhea is pain that associates with other conditions such as endometriosis, fibroids, or other pelvic inflammatory diseases (Chen, Draucker and Carpenter, 2018). Women were recruited from a list of survey registrants, who were willing to be contacted to be a part of a survey. These women were eligible for this study only if they were over the age of 18, have had symptoms of dysmenorrhea in the last six months, can read and write in English, and were living in the US. For this study to reach out to different women about being a part of the study, approval from the University of

## DYSMENORRHEA AND ITS EFFECTS ON WOMEN

Wisconsin-Madison Health Sciences Institutional Review Board was necessary. At the completion of the experiment, the researchers found six themes related to women's thoughts about dysmenorrhea experiences.

### **Key Points**

This study used 762 participants, while 311 of them entered responses to the open-ended questions. 86 women did not directly address the question and their responses were removed from the study. The final sample of women included was a total of 225, and their responses were used for the thematic analysis (Chen, Draucker and Carpenter, 2018). Six themes were concluded from this research study. Those included: the dysmenorrhea symptom experience varied among women, among time, a variety of factors influenced the experience, dysmenorrhea could have a negative impact on daily lives, dysmenorrhea was not always seen as a legitimate health issue and treatments varied in acceptability and effectiveness (Chen, Draucker and Carpenter, 2018). These key points show all of the different responses that this study developed among the women. Many factors play a part in dysmenorrhea; this study sheds light on the most important ones that affect women.

### **Assumptions**

Based upon this study, it's found that many women admit to having increased symptoms with childbearing, aging and menopause. To treat these symptoms women may turn to pharmacological and nonpharmacological interventions to help heal the dysmenorrhea (Chen, Draucker and Carpenter, 2018). The Ottawa Decision Support Framework states that treatment decisions should be based upon what the patient needs, and their preferences, expectations,

## DYSMENORRHEA AND ITS EFFECTS ON WOMEN

goals, previous treatment responses, and treatment risks (Chen, Draucker and Carpenter, 2018).

There is more research that needs to be done regarding dysmenorrhea and the treatments used for women. The way this study was set up, it allowed them to have a range of different experiences throughout all of the women. The differences helped them to see which was the most common among the women. An assumption that can be taken away from this study is that dysmenorrhea is real, and it affects so many women today. It is essential for nurses and healthcare providers to take their patients seriously and believe the pain that they are describing. Having your patients best interest at heart will help you to treat them accurately.

### **Deficit/Conclusion**

In conclusion of this experiment, the study provides new information on the complex, dynamic, and heterogeneous nature of dysmenorrhea (Chen, Draucker and Carpenter, 2018). The findings from this study, highlight the needs for further research into this problem. There is a definite need for the healthcare providers to pay attention to this problem in their clinical practice to help their patients suffering from dysmenorrhea.

### **Assessment of anxiety-depression levels and perceptions of quality of life in adolescents with dysmenorrhea**

The purpose of this study is to assess the anxiety-depression levels and the perceptions of quality of life for adolescents with dysmenorrhea. Adolescents were recruited for this study between the ages of 12-18. “In adolescents, primary dysmenorrhea is seen in normal ovulatory cycles without any pelvic pathology. Its incidence has been reported as 60–93% in adolescents worldwide.” (Sahin et al., 2018, p. 2). The researchers want to see how dysmenorrhea can affect the mental health and social life of an individual. “It is thought that the levels of anxiety and

## DYSMENORRHEA AND ITS EFFECTS ON WOMEN

depression, which have been found to be associated with many types of pain, are also associated with dysmenorrhea. Emotional and behavioral problems increase menstrual cycle problems and dysmenorrhea.” (Sahin et al., 2018, p. 2). “Depression is a known menstruation-associated symptom that often occurs in response to menstrual pain and to the anticipation of the next menstrual period.” (Kato, 2016, p. 70). Since this study involved adolescents under the age of 18, the researchers had to gain approval by the Ethics Committee on Scientific Research and Publications of Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, and the participants had to provide written consent from their parents.

### **Key Points**

This study uses 60 participants with dysmenorrhea and 41 healthy adolescents without dysmenorrhea. “This study used the Pediatric Quality of Life Inventory for assessing the perceptions of quality of life, the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for measuring anxiety levels, and the Children’s Depression Inventory for measuring depression levels.” (Sahin et al., 2018, p.1). In this study a timeframe was used for the young girls who had dysmenorrhea; dysmenorrhea had to be present between January 2015 and July 2015. The way this study worked, was that each participant was asked to complete a demographic data sheet with several different questions on it. Questions that were listed include age, education level, academic success, age at menarche (the establishment or beginning of the menstrual cycle (TheFreeDictionary.com, 2018).), time from the onset of dysmenorrhea and duration of dysmenorrhea, family history of dysmenorrhea, and measures taken during painful periods (Sahin et al., 2018). Scoring of the data collection is performed in three domains; “Total score is obtained by summing the psychosocial health summary score and the physical health summary score, which in turn are obtained by adding the

## DYSMENORRHEA AND ITS EFFECTS ON WOMEN

scores for the items assessing emotional, social and school functions. A higher total score indicates a better perception of the quality of life.” (Sahin et al., 2018, p. 2).

### **Assumptions**

“When the correlation of age, age at menarche, time from the onset of dysmenorrhea and duration of dysmenorrhea with the scale scores was examined in the dysmenorrhea group; it was found that the scale scores had no correlation with age, age at menarche and time from the onset of dysmenorrhea” (Sahin et al., 2018, p. 3). From this study, in the girls who have dysmenorrhea, the depression and anxiety scores were higher than those who do not, and the quality of life was lower in the young girls with dysmenorrhea. It can be assumed from this article that there is a common factor with dysmenorrhea in adolescents and the relation to anxiety/depression.

### **Deficit/Conclusion**

In conclusion, “it was found that increasing severity of dysmenorrhea further increased the extent of impairment in mental health and the perception of psychosocial health. The likelihood of dysmenorrhea was shown to be higher among cases with higher levels of depression” (Sahin et al., 2018, p. 6). It is vital for nurses to know that there is always a change that the mental health of a patient can be related to other problems or disorders that individual is having.

### **Electroacupuncture is Beneficial for Primary Dysmenorrhea: The Evidence from Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials**

There are many options when it comes to treating dysmenorrhea. One example is herbal medicines. “Herbal medicines can be used alone to prevent and treat primary dysmenorrhea or used to augment other therapies (nutritional, hydrotherapy, and/or pharmaceutical)” (Yarnell, 2015, p. 224). It was found that herbal medicines have the most evidence of efficacy and are

## DYSMENORRHEA AND ITS EFFECTS ON WOMEN

almost always important to include in a formula or natural-treatment plan (Yarnell, 2015).

However, this article focuses on the aspects of electroacupuncture to help the symptoms associated with dysmenorrhea. “Acupuncture, an integral part of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), has been verified to be effective in relieving the menstrual pain and reducing the symptoms of primary dysmenorrhea through plenty of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and systematic reviews.” (Yu et al., 2017, p. 1). To be able to participate in this study, women must be diagnosed with primary dysmenorrhea. Any secondary dysmenorrhea conditions such as endometriosis, uterine myoma, and ovarian cysts, will be excluded from this study. If electroacupuncture works, it can be a great tool in treating patients in the different healthcare settings.

### **Key Points**

This study consists of 1951 participants that will examine the effects of EA therapy. The researchers searched six electronic databases to find the perfect one to use that would be an eligible study. They have two groups, the control group, which received pharmacological treatments and experimental groups, which were required to receive the acupuncture. All of these studies compared the EA therapy to conventional drug therapy (Yu et al., 2017). The goal of the EA therapy is to minimize the pelvic pain that starts with the onset of the menstrual flow (Yu et al., 2017).

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions from this study show that electroacupuncture therapy can be helpful for individuals who suffer from dysmenorrhea. Electroacupuncture can be an excellent option for those women who prefer not to turn to drug therapy measures. In the study it was shown that EA

## DYSMENORRHEA AND ITS EFFECTS ON WOMEN

had some positive effects on the women who were in the experimental group. For future purposes, there is a demand for further studies of the effects on electroacupuncture on women who are suffering from primary dysmenorrhea.

### **Deficit/Conclusion**

In conclusion, the results of this study appear to be encouraging. The effects of EA can provide considerable immediate analgesic effect for primary dysmenorrhea and its immediate effect of pain relief (Yu et al., 2017). To judge whether EA is useful for treating PD in future studies, future trials on the evaluation of therapeutic effects should comply with international standards

### **Conclusion**

Dysmenorrhea is a prevalent condition in women today. Finding the cause of each individual's reported dysmenorrhea is critical for nurses so that they can help find the root of the problem. Knowing what is causing it can help the healthcare team make the right decisions for treatment. There are many different treatments used today for dysmenorrhea, including certain pain relievers (NSAIDS), birth control pills that include estrogen and progestin, the hormonal intrauterine device (IUD), vitamin B1 and magnesium supplements, uterine artery embolization, hysterectomy and of course, acupuncture (Acog.org, 2015). Dysmenorrhea affects women of all ages and is a severe condition. It is important for nurses to believe the amount of pain our patient is explaining to us that they are in. By doing this we can determine which dysmenorrhea our patient suffers from, primary or secondary (Cleveland Clinic, 2018). Overall, there are many different effects that dysmenorrhea can have on an individual, it is important for the healthcare team to find out how to accurately treat our patients who suffer from dysmenorrhea.

## DYSMENORRHEA AND ITS EFFECTS ON WOMEN

## References

- Acog.org. (2015). *Dysmenorrhea: Painful Periods – ACOG*. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.acog.org/Patients/FAQs/Dysmenorrhea-Painful-Periods>
- Chen, C., Draucker, C. and Carpenter, J. (2018). What women say about their dysmenorrhea: a qualitative thematic analysis. *BMC Women's Health*, 18(1).
- Cleveland Clinic. (2018). *What Is Dysmenorrhea*. Cleveland Clinic: Health Library. Retrieved from <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/4148-dysmenorrhea>
- Kato, T. (2016). Effects of Flexibility in Coping with Menstrual Pain on Depressive Symptoms. *Pain Practice*, 17(1), pp.70-77.
- Sahin, N., Kasap, B., Kirli, U., Yeniceri, N. and Topal, Y. (2018). Assessment of anxiety-depression levels and perceptions of quality of life in adolescents with dysmenorrhea. *Reproductive Health*, 15(1).
- TheFreeDictionary.com. (2018). *Menarche*. Retrieved from:  
<https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/menarche>
- Yarnell, E. (2015). Herbal Medicine for Dysmenorrhea. *Alternative and Complementary Therapies*, 21(5), pp.224-228.
- Yu, S., Lv, Z., Zhang, Q., Yang, S., Wu, X., Hu, Y., Zeng, F., Liang, F. and Yang, J. (2017). Electroacupuncture is Beneficial for Primary Dysmenorrhea: The Evidence from Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials. *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, pp.1-14.