

Working through the menopause

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Some women sail through it, others find it a challenge but few women like to talk openly about the menopause.

With 70 per cent of women aged between 45 and 59 now in work, The University of Nottingham has been commissioned by the British Occupational Health Research Foundation to ask women, in total confidence, about their experience of working through the menopause.

The menopause happens to all women, usually between the ages of 45 and 55. Researchers are hoping that several hundred women in this age group will answer their questionnaire — the more responses they get, the more powerful the results will be.

The research team hopes the results, based on the views of women in 6 different organisations throughout the UK, will provide useful information for women about how to cope with the menopause at work. It will also help employers and doctors support and advise them.

Although women constitute nearly half of the UK's workforce and the menopause is a significant event in the lives of all women, its effects on women's working life have been subject to very little research.

The study, led by Professor Amanda Griffiths in the Institute of Work, Health and Organisations, will explore the huge gap in our understanding of women's experiences of working through the menopause. Professor Griffiths said: "With so many women aged between 45 and 59 now in work, and with this figure expected to rise, it is surprising how little

research has been carried out into women's experience of working through the menopause. Women are very keen to help rectify this and are being very generous with their time talking to us about their experiences. I hope the results of this work will make a difference."

The menopause marks the end of a woman's fertility. Changes in hormone levels can result in intermittent symptoms, over several years, such as 'hot flushes', sweating, difficulty sleeping, tiredness, stress, increased susceptibility to anxiety, even concentration problems. Some women may need medical advice and treatment.

Employers and trade unions are slowly beginning to recognise that menopausal women may need special consideration in the workplace. Health and safety policies rarely acknowledge the problems that can be experienced by women in later life.

The research team have designed an anonymous, confidential questionnaire that asks about if and how the menopause affects women at work, how they cope, and what employers could do to help. The questionnaire is based on interviews undertaken with 60 women.

The research is due to be completed by early next year.

Source: University of Nottingham

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