

Study finds women going through menopause need to be better supported at work

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All women go through the menopause, and most women work, so how does the menopause affect women at work? This is the question asked by a group of researchers at La Trobe University and Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. Their results indicate that many women need more managerial support going through the menopause; otherwise their experience could be lost to the workforce. Their findings are reported at the World Congress on the Menopause, taking place in Cancùn, Mexico.

The Women at Work study looked at health and well-being in working [women](#), with a special emphasis on experiences close to the menopause. All the women were working in [higher education](#) in Australia. The researchers surveyed a total of 839 women between the ages of 40 and 75 (average age, 51) working at 3 universities, for their attitudes to 4 main factors related to work: [work engagement](#), job satisfaction, intention to quit and organizational commitment. The women worked in executive, administrative and academic positions.

Overall, they found that menstrual status did not affect work outcomes. But they did find that if a woman had one of the major symptoms associated with the menopause – for example weakness or fatigue, disturbed sleep or anxiety, then this did influence how they regarded work.

Two-thirds of the women (67%) experience problematic symptoms 81% of women felt that they were valued for the work they did. Yet only 1% of all survey respondents reported that their workplace had line

management training in awareness of the menopause at work, and 3% reported that their workplace had informal support networks that help women going through the menopause.

Women who reported that anxiety was a problem for them indicated greater intention to leave, less [job satisfaction](#), were less engaged at work, and showed less organizational commitment, than those who did not report anxiety as a problem.

Lead researcher Professor Gavin Jack said, "What is really important is not the fact of going through the menopause in itself, but the frequency and severity of symptoms which women experience, and how these factors affect their work.

He continued: "Having undertaken this research, we have come to the conclusion that information and support relating to menopause at [work](#) should ideally be part of a broader line management training programme about health and well-being in later life.

Not enough attention is paid to the experiences which people go through at different stages of life – the workplace treats this very unevenly. For example, businesses plan for younger people to be accommodated through parental leave after the birth of a child, but no provision is made to cope with the problems experienced by women going through symptoms experienced during and after the menopause, or other lifestyle episodes that occur later in life surrounding health, well-being and caring responsibilities. This is short-sighted, it means that an organisation doesn't get the best out of their workers, but it also means that other workers may have to pick up on problems. In any other area of working life, if you know that there is a potential problem, you plan for it."

Commenting for the International Menopause Society, Professor Mary Ann Lumsden (Glasgow) said, "This is an important subject. Not enough

employers pay attention to the individual needs of workers, and obviously if a woman is going through a difficult [menopause](#) then it's not good for her, her employers, and perhaps even her co-workers. A little support and forethought from employers could save everyone a lot of stress. Employers should recognise that this is a problem time for many women, and as it can go on for several years the implications are as great potentially as being pregnant."

Provided by International Menopause Society

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