

Endometriosis a burden on women's lives

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Endometriosis often takes a long time to be diagnosed and affects all areas of a women's life, a study has found.

Research led by Monash University's Kate Young published in the Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care found that endometriosis affects [women's](#) sex lives, [personal relationships](#), work life, and emotional wellbeing.

Endometriosis is a chronic, recurring disease that is experienced by approximately 10 per cent of women worldwide. Common symptoms include painful menstruation, heavy menstrual bleeding, painful sex and infertility.

Ms Young, from the Jean Hailes Research Unit at the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, reviewed a number of papers that documented women's experiences of endometriosis.

"The most common theme was that women had experienced delays in diagnosis," Ms Young said.

The study found that women were more likely to be diagnosed sooner when they approached their doctor describing symptoms as fertility-related rather than a menstrual issue.

"Some women initially delayed seeking help for their symptoms because they believed all women had [painful periods](#). When women revealed their symptoms to a family member, friend or medical professional their

experiences were typically normalised as being what all women must endure," Ms Young said.

The study also found that women often felt frustrated and angry at unsatisfactory experiences with healthcare providers, and had concerns about the effectiveness and side effects of treatments.

"Women want their doctors to really listen to their experience and concerns. They want to explain the true impact of the condition on their lives, rather than simply rank their pain on a scale from one to 10," Ms Young said.

The study found that further research was needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of endometriosis as experienced by diverse groups of women.

"The next stage of my research is to conduct interviews with women from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and also recruit more GPs from rural and urban settings to take part in the research," Ms Young said.

This research will contribute to the improved health care of women with [endometriosis](#) in Australia, and around the world.

More information: "Women's experiences of endometriosis: a systematic review and synthesis of qualitative research" Kate Young, Jane Fisher, Maggie Kirkman. *J Fam Plann Reprod Health Care* [DOI: 10.1136/jfprhc-2013-100853](https://doi.org/10.1136/jfprhc-2013-100853)

Provided by Monash University

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