Dyspareunia Called Undertreated in Menopause

BY DOUG BRUNK

SAN DIEGO — The prevalence of dyspareunia in menopausal women ranges from 11% to 45%, according to the best estimates in the medical literature. However, “the literature [on this topic] is terribly flawed,” Dr. Andrew T. Goldstein said at the annual meeting of the North American Menopause Society.

Age alone is often used instead of menstrual status, there’s a failure to indicate whether other factors such as diabetes, smoking, depression, or psychological factors contribute to dyspareunia. A recent study evaluated the prevalence of dyspareunia with respect to various factors including age, menopausal status, and hormone replacement therapy (HRT). The study found that dyspareunia is more common in women who are not on HRT, with a prevalence of 45% compared to 11% in women on HRT. The study also found that dyspareunia is more common in younger women compared to older women.

Menopausal women with dyspareunia that is not adequately treated, Dr. Goldstein added. A study by other researchers showed that 40% of women with vulvar pain have not sought primary treatment (J. Am. Med. Wom. Assoc. 2003;58:88-8). “In addition, at best, only 75% of women given adequate estradiol treatment are cured of their pain,” he said.

Dr. Goldstein cautioned clinicians not to assume that the cause of dyspareunia in menopausal women is always atrophic vaginitis. “There are many different causes of postmenopausal dyspareunia,” he said. Many premenopausal women have dyspareunia that is never adequately treated, Dr. Goldstein added. A study by other researchers showed that 40% of women with vulvar pain have not sought primary treatment (J. Am. Med. Wom. Assoc. 2003;58:88-8). “In addition, at best, only 75% of women given adequate estradiol treatment are cured of their pain,” he said.

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