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Severity of Menopause Symptoms Can Affect a Woman's Cognitive Performance

New study suggests that severe depression and sexual dysfunction, in particular, can affect a woman's orientation, registration, attention, recall, and language and visuospatial skills

CLEVELAND, Ohio (Jan. 12, 2022)—Menopause is often accompanied by an array of symptoms that can detract from a woman's quality of life. A new study suggests that the severity of some of those symptoms—especially depression and sexual dysfunction—were linked to a woman's cognitive performance. Study results are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

Although menopause is a natural phenomenon, not all women across ethnic groups experience it the same way. The frequency and severity of symptoms can vary greatly between one woman and the next. Previous studies have evaluated the effect of these symptoms on a woman's physical and mental well-being. This new study involving more than 400 women is different because it evaluated the effect of the severity of menopause symptoms on overall cognitive performance and its five domains, including orientation, registration, attention, recall, and language and visuospatial skills.

Among other things, researchers in this new study considered the severity of such common menopause symptoms as sexual dysfunction, vasomotor symptoms (hot flashes), depression, and anxiety. They concluded that the cognitive performance of women is sensitive to the severity of certain menopause symptoms, especially depression and sexual dysfunction. In this particular study, no association was identified between the severity of vasomotor symptoms and cognitive performance, although other studies have suggested that such an association exists.

Study results are published in the article "Is cognitive performance of women sensitive to the severity of menopausal symptoms?"

"This study highlights the effect of menopause symptoms on cognitive functioning and demonstrates a link between severe depressive and sexual symptoms, specifically, with cognitive performance. Mood disturbances are common in the menopause transition and can affect memory and sexual functioning. These findings underscore the importance of evaluating women for menopause symptoms and providing appropriate treatment, when indicated, including treatment of depression and sexual dysfunction," says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director.

For more information about menopause and healthy aging, visit www.menopause.org.

Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife

and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.