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Women With Diabetes at an Early Age Likely to Enter Menopause Early

New study suggests that the age at which a woman is diagnosed with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes will determine when she enters menopause

CLEVELAND, Ohio (October 12, 2022)—Persons living with diabetes are at greater risk of a number of health conditions including eye and foot problems, heart attacks and strokes, and kidney and nerve damage. A new study suggests that the earlier a woman becomes diabetic, the earlier she will likely enter menopause. Study results will be presented during The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) Annual Meeting in Atlanta, October 12-15, 2022.

Over the past few decades, the incidence of type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes has grown steadily. As a result, more women than ever before are expected to spend a larger proportion of their reproductive lives living with a diabetes diagnosis. A number of studies have previously evaluated the risk of developing diabetes postmenopause, but this new study that followed more than 11,000 women sought to understand the long-term implications of premenopause diabetes on women's reproductive health, including their age at natural menopause.

Based on the analysis, the researchers found that early age of diagnosis of both type 1 diabetes (<30 y) and type 2 diabetes (30-39 y) was associated with earlier menopause than women with no diagnosis of diabetes. Additionally, later age of diagnosis of type 2 diabetes (>40 y) was associated with later age at natural menopause as compared to those who did not have diabetes. No significant association was found between gestational diabetes and age at menopause.

“Our large retrospective cohort study shows that, even after adjusting for covariates associated with age at natural menopause, we still find an association between early diagnosis of diabetes and earlier menopause and a later diabetes diagnosis with a later age at menopause as compared to those who did not have diabetes. We hope our work lays the foundation for more research in this area so we can better understand and prevent the long-term impacts of diabetes on the human body and the reproductive system,” says Dr. Vrati Mehra, lead author of the study, from the University of Toronto.

“This research adds to the growing evidence relative to the collective toll diabetes takes on the human body. In this case, it shows that young women living with a diagnosis of diabetes are more susceptible to accelerated ovarian aging and early menopause,” says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director.

Dr. Faubion and Dr. Mehra are available for interviews before the presentation at the Annual Meeting.

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.