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Night Sweats Versus Hot Flashes

New study suggests night sweats cause more stress than hot flashes and can occur day or night

CLEVELAND, Ohio (October 12, 2022)—What’s worse—night sweats or hot flashes as they relate to depression and stress? Although both can have a significant effect on a woman’s quality of life, a new study out of the University of Massachusetts suggests that night sweats might actually be more stressful. Study results will be presented during The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) Annual Meeting in Atlanta, October 12-15, 2022.

Many women think of night sweats and hot flashes as being the same thing that occurs at different times of the day. Although both of these common menopause symptoms produce feelings of being overheated, they are different phenomena. A hot flash can occur during the day or night and may or may not be associated with sweating, whereas night sweats are periods of intense sweating that occur at night.

Although both night sweats and hot flashes are bothersome, is one worse than the other when it comes to creating stress and depression? That’s the question researchers from the University of Massachusetts asked 200 women experiencing menopause.

What they found was that night sweats were significantly associated with depression and stress, whereas hot flashes (even those at night) were significantly associated with only depression after adjusting for menopause status, financial comfort, and marriage. In addition, women who reported the highest hot flash frequency at night had significantly higher depression scores compared with women who had the highest hot flash frequency during other times of the day. These results support previous studies that found that sleep disruptions during menopause have a significant effect on quality of life and suggest that night sweats may have more severe consequences than hot flashes.

“We know that sleep disturbances are one of the biggest detriments for women going through menopause, but these results are unique because they show that women experiencing night sweats, rather than just hot flashes, may be at an even bigger disadvantage,” says Sofiya Shreyer, lead author of the study from the Anthropology Department at the University of Massachusetts.

“This study adds to the growing evidence that menopause symptoms such as hot flashes and night sweats can significantly detract from a woman’s quality of life and should be taken seriously by healthcare professionals. More research is necessary to fully understand the mechanisms of these symptoms and

their overall effect on a woman's menopause experience," says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director.

Dr. Faubion and Ms. Shreyer 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.