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Women With HIV at Increased Risk of Early Onset Menopause

New study pinpoints median age of menopause at 48 years for women with HIV (3 years younger than the general population)

CLEVELAND, Ohio (November 6, 2019)—Thanks to medical advancements, HIV-positive women now have a longer life expectancy, exposing them to numerous midlife health issues such as menopause. A new study demonstrates that women with HIV are more likely to enter the menopause transition at an average age of 48 years, 3 years younger than the general population. Study results are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

Newly diagnosed HIV-positive patients who adhere to the latest therapy protocols are expected to live into their mid-70s or longer. That means these patients are now faced with aging issues that affect sexual and reproductive health, including menopause.

The average age of menopause in Canada and the United States is between 50 and 52 years. Previous studies have shown that women living with HIV are at an increased risk of early (age between 40 and 45 y) and premature (age <40 y) menopause (also known as primary ovarian insufficiency). However, this study from Canada is the first known study to determine the average age of menopause for HIV patients, the prevalence of early menopause (between 40 and 45 y) and premature menopause (before 40 y), and other correlates influencing age at menopause.

Study researchers confirmed that women living with HIV experience menopause at a younger age, specifically 48 years, roughly 3 years earlier than uninfected women. This population additionally had higher rates of early menopause and premature menopause. In addition, lower education and hepatitis C coinfections were also shown to influence the risk of early menopause, with other possible modifying factors including marital status and region of birth.

Because menopause is associated with changes in mood, sexual function, reduced quality of life, and increased the risk of developing other comorbidities such as heart disease and osteoporosis, a woman's increased risk of early menopause has implications for healthcare practitioners planning their care.

Study results appear in the article "Prevalence and correlates of early-onset menopause among women living with HIV in Canada."

"Healthcare practitioners should be aware of the increased risk for premature and early menopause in their female patients living with HIV in order to provide appropriate counseling and management, given the known increased risk for potential adverse long-term health consequences associated with early estrogen deprivation," says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director.

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

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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.