

P-515 An Exploration of Young Women's Process of Adjustment in Spontaneous Premature Ovarian Insufficiency: A Grounded Theory Study

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Study question

How do young women process their condition?

Summary answer

Throughout the women's adolescence and early twenties, they continually reconceptualised their menopausal body, until they achieved a sense of being developmentally 'fully grown'.

What is known already

Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI) is the decline of ovarian function before the age of 40 (Cooper et al., 2011) Prevalence rates of POI can reach 3-6% of women aged between 12 and 40 and for the majority of cases no known cause will be found. This is referred to as spontaneous or idiopathic POI and can be a life changing diagnosis with profound physical and psychological consequences (Webber., 2017). However, little is known about younger women's experiences of receiving a diagnosis, treatment and overall experiential nature of the condition by women of their age.

Study design, size, duration

Women that received a diagnosis between the ages of 12 to 20 years old (adolescence) were interviewed.

Participants/materials, setting, methods

Semi-structured interviews were conducted over Zoom, with twelve women that had experienced a diagnosis of POI/POF during their adolescence (now aged 21 to 35 years old). The interviews were transcribed and analysed following constructivist Grounded Theory methods.

Main results and the role of chance

The gradual awareness of physical developmental differences from their peers evoked a strong desire to recreate naturally occurring 'womanly' milestones, such as the development

of hips and breasts, menstruating, and future family planning. The young women described an all-consuming compulsion to 'keep up' with their peers following their diagnosis, during their teenage years and into their twenties, falling a sense of "falling behind". This required the young women to continually reconceptualize their menopausal body, how they perceived its purpose and its appearance, allowing them to eventually mature their self-perception of their body. Viewing themselves as 'fully grown' women and no longer developmentally different to other women.

Limitations, reasons for caution

The research findings are limited to the confines of qualitative research and therefore larger studies are suggested, moving forward.

Wider implications of the findings

The research suggests that psychological support aimed at supporting the menopausal transition at this early age would be greatly beneficial to young women that have received a diagnosis. This may protect against the later development of body dysmorphic presentations and depression related conditions.

Trial registration number

N/A