

Somatosensory Amplification And Hot Flashes In Breast Cancer Survivors And Healthy Menopausal Women

Christele M. Igega¹ and Janet S. Carpenter¹

¹Center for Enhancing Quality of Life in Chronic Illness, Indiana University School of Nursing, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, IN

Somatosensory amplification is a cognitive explanation of the tendency to sense normal somatic and visceral sensations as intense, noxious, and disturbing. An individual with somatosensory amplification takes existing physical sensations and/or conditions and focuses on them to the point that the perception of these often-normal sensations becomes overly bothersome and intense. The goal of this study is to describe the concept of somatosensory amplification and its role in the menopausal symptom experience of two target groups: menopausal breast cancer survivors and healthy midlife women. This is a cross-sectional, descriptive, correlational study. This study looked at baseline data containing the demographics, somatosensory amplification data, and mood, sleep and hot flash data (frequency, bother, control, interference, and perceived control) of 98 breast cancer survivors and 135 midlife women. Each item on the Somatosensory Amplification Scale (SSAS) was looked at in order to determine if there is a significant difference between healthy menopausal women and menopausal breast cancer survivors. The total SSAS scores were also analyzed to determine if there was a difference between the two groups. Midlife women had a higher total SSAS score than breast cancer survivors, but the group differences in total scores and individual items were not significant. Somatosensory amplification was significantly correlated with hot flash interference, perceived control of hot flashes, mood and sleep. The outcomes offer more insight into how somatosensory amplification can affect the every day lives of menopausal women and the perceived control they have over their hot flashes. Findings may prove to be useful in selecting more appropriate and relevant interventions that have the potential of improving quality of life of menopausal women.

Mentor: Janet S. Carpenter

Center for Enhancing Quality of Life in Chronic Illness, Indiana University School of Nursing, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, IN