



LETTERS



NICE ON MENOPAUSE

NICE guidance on menopause: cognitive behavioural therapy is an effective non-hormonal intervention for managing vasomotor symptoms

Myra S Hunter *professor of clinical health psychology*¹, Amanda Griffiths *professor*², Eleanor Mann *psychologist*³, Rona Moss-Morris *professor*⁴, Melanie Smith *clinical psychologist*⁵, Pauline Slade *professor*⁶

¹Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, Guy's Campus, London SE1 9RT; ²University of Nottingham, UK; ³Medidata Solutions, London, UK; ⁴King's College London, UK; ⁵Salford Pain Centre, Manchester, UK; ⁶University of Liverpool, UK

The full document of the first National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guideline on diagnosis and management of menopause¹ recommends (page 18) that GPs should:

“Give information to menopausal women and their family members or carers (as appropriate) about the following types of treatment for menopausal symptoms:

- Hormonal, for example hormone replacement therapy (HRT)
- Non-hormonal, for example clonidine
- Non-pharmaceutical, for example cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).²

The evidence for CBT as a treatment for depressed mood and anxiety is included in the guidance, but CBT has also been developed to help women self manage vasomotor symptoms, and this evidence is not provided. Group and self help CBT have been shown to reduce the impact of these symptoms significantly in three clinical trials with more than 600 women (well women and women with breast cancer).³⁻⁵ Improvements are maintained 26 weeks after randomisation, there are additional benefits to quality of life, and no adverse effects were reported. The treatment is brief and available in self help format,⁶ with a group manual available for health professionals.⁷

On the basis of this evidence, a recent position statement from the North American Menopause Society recommended CBT as an effective non-hormonal management option for vasomotor

symptoms.⁸ Non-hormonal management of these symptoms is an important consideration when hormone therapy is not an option, because of either medical contraindications or a woman's personal choice.

Competing interests: MSH, EM, and MS are authors of the research on cognitive behavioural therapy referenced in this letter.

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- 3 Ayers B, Smith M, Hellier J, et al. Effectiveness of group and self-help cognitive behaviour therapy to reduce problematic menopausal hot flushes and night sweats (MENOS 2): a randomized controlled trial. *Menopause* 2012;19:7749-59.
- 4 Duijts SF, van Beurden M, Oldenburg HS, et al. Efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy and physical exercise in alleviating treatment-induced menopausal symptoms in patients with breast cancer: results of a randomized, controlled, multicenter trial. *J Clin Oncol* 2012;30:4124-33.
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- 7 Hunter MS, Smith M. Managing hot flushes with group cognitive behaviour therapy: an evidence based treatment manual for health professionals. Routledge, 2015.
- 8 Position statement: non-hormonal management of menopause-associated vasomotor symptoms: 2015 position statement of the North American Menopause Society. *Menopause* 2015;22:1-20.

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