

Make menopause a mandatory part of the curriculum for all healthcare sciences and medical students

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 2 Rhagfyr 2024
Petitions Committee | 2 December 2024

Reference: SR24/9803/3

Petition Number: P-06-1480

Petition title: Make menopause a mandatory part of the curriculum for all healthcare sciences and medical students

Text of petition: Menopause is experienced by approximately 50% of the population. There are a wide variety of symptoms and long term health risks associated with it which can significantly impact physical and mental health, and which for some people can affect their ability to work, socialise, and maintain good health and wellbeing.

In spite of this, education about menopause during healthcare and medical training programs in Wales is minimal, and there is no mandatory requirement for including this topic.

It is not just doctors who will care for people experiencing perimenopause and menopause symptoms. As such, as well as calling for all medical students to be taught about menopause symptom and interventions, we also call for all students of healthcare sciences in Wales to be educated. Nurses, physiotherapists, dentists, optometrists, pharmacists, radiographers, ODPs, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists will all encounter people experiencing menopause in their professional practice.



Mandatory education will enable greater confidence and competence in identifying perimenopause/menopause, and improve outcomes for patients.

Promptly identifying perimenopause/menopause can enable healthcare and medical professionals to empower patients to work in partnership to manage their own health effectively, minimise waste through unnecessary prescribing, and reduce repeat appointments and unnecessary referrals at a time where resourcing in the Welsh NHS is under strain.

1. Background

Women make up 51% of the population of Wales, and all of them will experience the menopause. The menopause is a natural part of ageing, and occurs when a woman stops having periods and is no longer able to become pregnant naturally. Menopause happens when the ovaries stop producing reproductive hormones, particularly oestrogen and progesterone. Symptoms include hot flushes, night sweats, mood changes, memory and concentration loss in addition to long-term conditions such as osteoporosis.

Typically menopause occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, with an average of 51 in the UK. However, 1 in 100 women experience the menopause before the age of 40; this is known as premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency. Menopause can also be caused surgically, when a woman's ovaries are removed (oophorectomy), and medically, when a woman is given hormone altering drugs called Gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) analogues.

Despite the universality of menopause, the British Menopause Society, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Society for Endocrinology say there has been a lack of support for women going through this phase. They say many women report a lack of education and their healthcare professionals' lack of adequate training on the menopause.

To tackle issues surrounding the menopause UK Menopause Taskforce was created with ministers and senior clinicians from all four nations.

Following this, [the Quality Statement for women and girls' health](#) (July 2022) was produced by the Welsh Government. It describes what health boards are expected to deliver such as:

- health boards will work with partners to further develop research, innovation, and education to enable delivery of a high quality, evidenced based, gender and culturally competent clinical care by a well-trained workforce.

An NHS Wales discovery report on [Women's Health in Wales report](#) (November 2022) highlighted that respondents felt like they were “not always ‘listened to’ or ‘heard’ by their healthcare professional”. They felt more could be done to improve their experience and that better education and training of GPs and other healthcare professionals is required.

The [All-Wales Menopause Task and Finish Group](#) (February 2023) report made recommendations to the Welsh government, such as:

- Timely access to a healthcare professional with expertise in the menopause in each general practice cluster; and
- Access to timely availability of multiprofessional menopause services.

The Welsh Government [has emphasised](#) the importance of menopause in GP training and continuous professional development provided by Health Education and Improvement Wales.

The NHS Wales Executive established the [National Strategic Clinical Net work for Women's Health](#) in 2024 to develop a Women's health plan for Wales. The [work plan for 2024/2025](#) aims to achieve this by building on the Government's Quality Statement for Women's and Girls' Health and the Discovery Report.

2. Welsh Parliament action

There have been questions asked in the Senedd on menopause. For instance,

- [Conservative MS Laura Anne Jones](#) shared her personal experience of menopause in May 2024. She called on the Welsh Government to ensure better employment support is available for women experiencing menopause.

- Labour MS Vikki Howells asked the then Health Minister, Eluned Morgan MS about support for women in Wales who are experiencing the menopause in June 2021. Eluned Morgan MS responded that “the Welsh Government takes women’s health, including menopausal concerns, very seriously and expects all health boards to provide a full range of services to women experiencing the menopause in accordance with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance”.

The Petitions Committee also recently considered (September 2024) Petition P-06-1444: Women of North Wales have the right to have a Menopause Services/Clinic in Ysbyty Gwynedd.

3. Welsh Government response

The Welsh Government provided a response to the Petition on the 14 November 2024 from Jeremy Miles, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care.

The response states that, although every university, medical facility and medical school have their own syllabus and regulations for studying courses in medicine, they must follow the overall supervision and standards set by the General Medical Council (GMC). It says the Welsh Government is committed to improving menopause services. It references the 2023 report from the All-Wales Menopause Task and Finish Group and the NHS Executive National Strategic Clinical Network for Women’s Health., and notes that the network is developing a 10-year Women’s Health Plan for Wales, which will be published in December.

The response highlights that education on menstrual and reproductive health and wellbeing (including menopause) is mandatory for school aged children in the new Curriculum for Wales framework.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.