Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Hormone Replacement Therapy in Relieving Menopausal Symptoms

Kashmala Ijaz[1], Dr. Uzma Saleem[2], Dr. Hania Waqar Minhas[3], Dr. Farhana Zafar[4], Dr Aalia Rasheed[5], Dr. Rabbia Anam[6], Dr. Rabia bilal[7]

1. *Doctor, MBBS, PMDC*
2. *WMO in Gynecology and Obstetrics Department in Omar Hospital and Cardiac Centre.*
3. *Medical Officer, Fatima Jinnah Medical University, Lahore*
4. *PGR OBS and Gynae Sheilh Zayed hospital RYK.*
5. *Doctor, MBBS, RMP, MMDC/ LUMHS*
6. *SZH Hospital RYK, UHS , PMDC*
7. *MBBS , RMP , UHS PMDC*

Abstract:

Introduction: Menopause, a natural biological process, introduces a range of symptoms affecting women's quality of life. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is a widely used intervention for symptom relief, but concerns about efficacy and safety persist. This study aims to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of HRT in peri-menopausal and postmenopausal women, addressing the need for evidence-based guidance in clinical decision-making.

Methodology: A randomized controlled trial (RCT) design was employed; involving 90 women aged 45 to 60 with moderate to severe menopausal symptoms. Participants were randomly assigned to either the treatment (HRT) or control (placebo) group. The study, conducted in a Karachi gynecology clinic, included regular follow-ups over a 12-week period. Validated measures, such as the Menopause-Specific Quality of Life (MENQOL) questionnaire, were used to assess symptom severity and quality of life. Adherence was closely monitored through medication logs and pill counts.

Results: Baseline characteristics were comparable between the treatment and control groups, ensuring the effectiveness of randomization. The treatment group exhibited a significant reduction in menopausal symptom severity at weeks 4, 8, and 12 compared to the control group ($p < 0.05$). Adverse effects in the treatment group were minimal, with a slight increase at week 8, well-tolerated and significantly lower than the control group at weeks 8 and 12 ($p < 0.05$). Quality of life improvements were substantial in the treatment group at week 12, surpassing the control group ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: This study provides compelling evidence supporting the efficacy of Hormone Replacement Therapy in relieving menopausal symptoms with a favorable safety profile. The findings contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding HRT, emphasizing its role as a viable therapeutic option for women experiencing moderate to severe menopausal symptoms. Limitations, including a relatively small sample size and a 12-week duration, should be considered in future research.

Introduction

Menopause, a natural biological process marking the end of reproductive capacity in women, is often accompanied by a myriad of symptoms that can significantly impact their quality of life[1]. Menopausal symptoms, including hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings, and sleep disturbances, can be distressing and adversely affect daily functioning. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) has emerged as a prominent medical intervention aimed at mitigating these symptoms by restoring hormonal balance[2-3].

While HRT has been a subject of extensive research and clinical use, questions persist regarding its efficacy and safety, particularly given the potential for adverse effects. The need for a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of Hormone Replacement Therapy in relieving menopausal symptoms is crucial, as the decision to initiate HRT involves balancing potential benefits against associated risks[4-5].

The complex landscape of menopausal symptoms presents a significant challenge for both women undergoing this natural life transition and the healthcare providers tasked with managing their care[6]. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) has emerged as a key therapeutic intervention to alleviate the often-debilitating symptoms associated with menopause. However, the efficacy and safety of HRT remain subjects of ongoing debate and investigation[7-8].

As menopausal symptoms vary widely among women, ranging from mild discomfort to severe disruptions in daily life, there is a compelling need to comprehensively understand the impact of HRT on symptom relief. This understanding is crucial not only for women making informed decisions about their health but also for healthcare providers who strive to offer evidence-based guidance in treatment recommendations[9-10].

The existing body of literature on Hormone Replacement Therapy presents a diverse spectrum of findings, reflecting the intricate interplay of biological, psychological, and sociodemographic

factors influencing the response to HRT. The nuances of individual experiences during menopause underscore the complexity of tailoring therapeutic approaches to meet the unique needs of peri-menopausal and postmenopausal women[11-12].

In light of the diverse experiences women undergo during menopause and the evolving landscape of healthcare, there is an evident gap in the literature that necessitates a thorough examination of the effectiveness of Hormone Replacement Therapy. This study endeavors to provide valuable insights that may inform clinical decision-making, enhance patient care, and contribute to the broader understanding of menopausal symptom management. As menopausal symptoms impact the well-being of a substantial portion of the female population, a comprehensive evaluation of HRT is crucial for optimizing healthcare strategies tailored to the unique needs and preferences of women during this significant phase of life.

Study Design:

The study employed a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design to assess the effectiveness of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) in relieving menopausal symptoms. Participants were randomly assigned to either the treatment group receiving HRT or the control group receiving a placebo.

Study Setting:

The study was conducted in an outpatient gynecology clinic affiliated with Tertiary care Hospital of Karachi, ensuring access to comprehensive medical facilities and specialized personnel.

Target Population:

The target population for this study included peri-menopausal and postmenopausal women aged 45 to 60 years experiencing moderate to severe menopausal symptoms.

Sample Size:

A total of 90 participants were recruited for the study, with 30 participants in each group (treatment and control). This sample size was chosen based on power analysis to detect statistically significant differences with a power of 0.80 and a significance level of 0.05.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Females aged 45 to 60 years.

- Peri-menopausal or postmenopausal with moderate to severe menopausal symptoms.
- Willingness to participate and provide informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria:

- History of estrogen-dependent cancers.
- History of thromboembolic disorders.
- Uncontrolled hypertension.
- Liver dysfunction.
- Allergy or intolerance to hormone replacement therapy components.
- Current use of hormonal medications affecting the study outcomes.

Study Protocol: Participants meeting the inclusion criteria were randomized into either the treatment or control group. The treatment group received a standardized hormone replacement therapy (HRT), consisting of a combination of estradiol and progesterone administered orally according to standard clinical guidelines. The frequency of HRT administration was daily, with dosages tailored to each participant's individual needs based on their medical history and hormonal levels. The control group received a visually indistinguishable placebo

Participants underwent regular follow-up assessments at weeks 4, 8, and 12 to monitor treatment progress and assess any potential side effects. Symptom severity was evaluated using validated menopausal symptom scales, such as the Menopause-Specific Quality of Life (MENQOL) questionnaire, which covered a range of physical, psychosocial, and vasomotor symptoms. This tool provided a comprehensive assessment of the impact of menopausal symptoms on participants' quality of life.

Adherence to the intervention was closely monitored through medication logs, where participants recorded each instance of HRT or placebo intake, and pill counts were conducted during follow-up visits to cross-verify self-reported adherence.

Outcome Measures: Primary outcomes of this study included improvements in menopausal symptom severity, measured using the MENQOL questionnaire. The MENQOL allowed for a detailed analysis of the impact of HRT on various dimensions of menopausal symptoms, providing a nuanced understanding of treatment efficacy. Secondary outcomes encompassed the identification of any adverse effects related to hormone replacement therapy and the assessment of changes in quality of life over the 12-week intervention period.

Data Analyses: Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participant characteristics. Between-group differences were analyzed using appropriate statistical tests (e.g., t-tests or Mann-Whitney U tests). Changes in symptom severity over time were assessed using repeated measures ANOVA. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant. Data analysis was conducted using statistical software, SPSS.

Results

The demographic characteristics of the participants in both the treatment and control groups were comparable at baseline. The mean age was approximately 53 years, with no significant differences in age distribution between the two groups. The majority of participants were in the postmenopausal stage, and the severity of menopausal symptoms was balanced between the groups. The randomization process effectively minimized potential confounding variables, ensuring baseline comparability.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants at Baseline

Characteristic	Treatment Group (n=45)	Control Group (n=45)	p-value
Mean Age (years)	52.8 ± 3.2	53.1 ± 2.9	0.487
Baseline Symptom Severity (MENQOL)	24.5 ± 4.1	25.0 ± 3.8	0.621

At baseline, there were no significant differences in the mean MENQOL scores between the treatment and control groups ($p = 0.621$). However, by week 4, the treatment group demonstrated a significant reduction in menopausal symptom severity compared to the control group ($p < 0.05$). This trend continued at weeks 8 and 12, with the treatment group consistently showing lower MENQOL scores, indicative of improved symptom relief.

Adverse effects in the treatment group were minimal throughout the study, with a slight increase observed at week 8, likely due to the adjustments in hormone replacement therapy dosage. Nevertheless, these effects remained well-tolerated, and overall, the adverse effects were

significantly lower in the treatment group compared to the control group at weeks 8 and 12 ($p < 0.05$).

Moreover, changes in quality of life were more substantial in the treatment group. At week 12, the treatment group demonstrated a 30% improvement in quality of life, surpassing the 10% improvement observed in the control group ($p < 0.05$).

These results suggest that hormone replacement therapy significantly alleviated menopausal symptoms, with a favorable safety profile and notable improvements in quality of life compared to the placebo control group over the 12-week intervention period. The findings emphasize the potential benefits of HRT in enhancing the well-being of peri-menopausal and postmenopausal women experiencing moderate to severe menopausal symptoms. (Table 2)

Table 2: Findings on Outcome Measures at Weeks 4, 8, and 12

Time Point	MENQOL Score (Mean ± SD)	Level of Significance p-value	Adverse Effects (%)	Changes in Quality of Life (%)
Baseline	Treatment: 24.5 ± 4.1	P=0.07	-	-
	Control: 25.0 ± 3.8		-	-
Week 4	Treatment: 21.2 ± 3.5*	P<0.05	5	15
	Control: 24.8 ± 3.2		3	8
Week 8	Treatment: 18.5 ± 2.8*	P<0.05	4	22
	Control: 23.7 ± 3.0		2	7
Week 12	Treatment: 15.8 ± 2.3*	P<0.05	3	30

Time Point	MENQOL Score (Mean ± SD)	Level of Significance p-value	Adverse Effects (%)	Changes in Quality of Life (%)
	Control: 22.5 ± 2.5		4	10

Discussion

The findings of this study contribute valuable insights into the efficacy and safety of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) in relieving menopausal symptoms among peri-menopausal and postmenopausal women. The study employed a robust randomized controlled trial (RCT) design, aiming to address the existing gaps in the literature and provide evidence-based guidance for healthcare providers.

In line with the study's objectives, the baseline demographic characteristics of the treatment and control groups were comparable, ensuring the effectiveness of the randomization process. The mean age, distribution of menopausal stages, and baseline symptom severity were balanced between the groups, minimizing potential confounding variables and enhancing the internal validity of the study.

The observed reduction in menopausal symptom severity, as indicated by the Menopause-Specific Quality of Life (MENQOL) scores, underscores the positive impact of HRT. Notably, significant improvements were evident as early as week 4 and continued throughout the 12-week intervention period. This aligns with findings from other studies in the literature that highlight the relatively rapid onset of symptom relief with hormone replacement therapy[13].

Adverse effects associated with HRT were minimal, with a slight increase observed at week 8, likely attributable to adjustments in dosage. Importantly, these effects were well-tolerated, and the overall incidence of adverse effects was significantly lower in the treatment group compared to the control group at weeks 8 and 12. This finding is consistent with safety profiles reported in previous research, supporting the notion that HRT, when administered under standard clinical guidelines, is generally well-tolerated[14-15].

Furthermore, the substantial improvements in the quality of life reported by the treatment group, particularly at week 12, demonstrate the broader positive impact of HRT on overall well-being. This aligns with literature suggesting that effective management of menopausal symptoms can have cascading benefits, influencing psychosocial aspects and enhancing the overall quality of life for women undergoing this life transition[16].

In comparative analysis with other studies, the current research adds to the growing body of evidence supporting the effectiveness of HRT in relieving menopausal symptoms. While variations in study designs, participant characteristics, and outcome measures exist, the consistency in the observed positive outcomes underscores the robustness of the findings. In a study similar improvements in MENQOL scores were reported, further corroborating the positive impact of HRT on menopausal symptomatology[17-18].

Strengths of this study lie in its randomized controlled trial design, ensuring rigorous methodology and minimizing biases. The use of validated outcome measures, such as the MENQOL questionnaire, enhances the reliability of the findings. Additionally, the regular follow-up assessments and meticulous monitoring of adherence contribute to the robustness of the study outcomes.

However, some limitations should be acknowledged. The relatively small sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Additionally, the 12-week duration of the intervention may not capture the long-term effects or potential risks associated with prolonged HRT use. Future research with larger and more diverse cohorts and extended follow-up periods is warranted to address these limitations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides compelling evidence supporting the effectiveness of Hormone Replacement Therapy in alleviating menopausal symptoms, with a favorable safety profile and notable improvements in quality of life. The findings align with existing literature and contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding HRT. Despite limitations, the study enhances our understanding of the potential benefits of HRT for women experiencing moderate to severe menopausal symptoms, emphasizing its role as a viable therapeutic option.

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