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## AN INTERSECTIONAL EXPLORATION OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES DURING MENOPAUSE

**LISA TAYLOR-SWANSON**, PHD, LAC, **MADISON MAUGHAN**, VAENTINE  
**MUKUNDENTE**, **LORI PACHECO**, **WENDY SANDERS**, **FAHINA TAVAKE-PASI**,  
**JEANNETTE VILLALTA**, **HEATHER MERKLEY**, & **CAMILLE MORENO**, DO, NCMP



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# OUR TEAM

## University of Utah



**Lisa**  
**Taylor-Swanson**, PhD, LAc




**Camille**  
**Moreno**, DO, NCMP

# FUNDING & CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- **Funding:** None to declare
- Conflict of Interest (**COI**): None to declare

# PURPOSE

The **purpose** of this study was to explore the intersectional dimensions of menopause as articulated by an ethnically and racially diverse group of midlife women from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds.



**LOOKING FOR WOMEN 35+ FOR INTEGRATIVE MEDICAL GROUP VISITS**  
Research Project

**MENOGAP** | Peri**MENO**pause Group **AcuPuncture**  
Prioritizing awareness, education and empowerment in perimenopause/menopause.

**PERIMENOPAUSE/MENOPAUSE MANAGEMENT** Learn more about the journey in perimenopause/menopause, your reproductive health, menstrual health, symptoms of perimenopause/menopause, and treatment options.

**BEHAVIORAL MANAGEMENT** Learn more about complementary and integrative therapies to help your perimenopausal/menopausal symptoms and concerns.

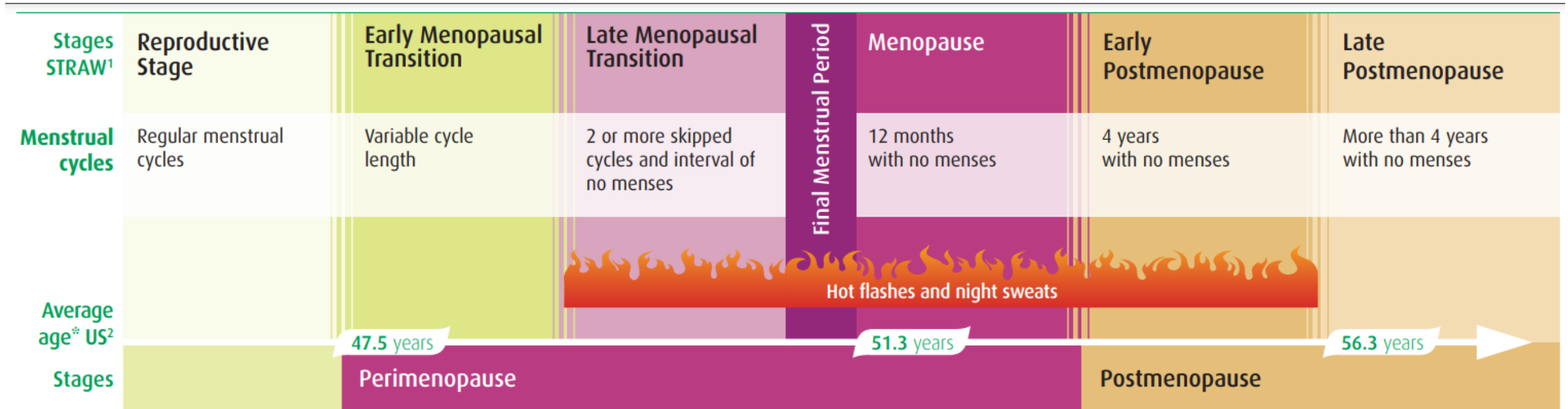
To learn more about the research study email [Menogap-sg@uemail.utah.edu](mailto:Menogap-sg@uemail.utah.edu)  
2.5-hour sessions will be held for 9 weeks and a “booster” session 3 months later in the South Jordan Health Center.

# BACKGROUND

- Midlife women's experiences have not been adequately represented historically as **most research is framed within and is interpreted by dominant conceptual categories largely developed by privileged individuals**
- **Midlife women are thus a marginalized group** with experiences that are shaped by a **multiplicity of social locations, including race, sexuality, dis/ability, age, social class, and gender.**



# BACKGROUND



• Note: the age at which a woman transitions and reaches menopause varies substantially. The same holds true for symptoms.  
 1 Based on Stages of Reproductive Aging Workshop (STRAW), Park City UT, USA, July 2001, J Women's Health Gen Based Med. 2001 Nov; 10(9):843-8  
 2 McKinley SM, Brambilia DJ, Posner JG. The normal menopause transition. Maturitas. 2008 Sep-Oct; 61(1-2):4-16

# BACKGROUND

- Rather than starting with empiricist *a priori* categories of experience, this study initiated an inquiry informed by
  - **Feminist standpoint theory**. This is a method to understand and ‘foreground’ marginalized voices. We asked about the experiences of midlife women and subsequently **returned the results to participants** to confirm or clarify the research team’s interpretations.

**Feminist Standpoint Theory:** Harding, ed., *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader* New York and London: Routledge, 2004 | Bell Hooks, *From Margin to Center*, Boston: South End Press, 1984  
**Intersectionality:** Crenshaw, Kimberle (1994). ["Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" \(PDF\)](#). Archived 18 April 2023 at the [Wayback Machine](#).

# METHODS

- We conducted 2 **focus groups** with 6 midlife women who comprise a Community Advisory Board (**CAB**)
- Employed **qualitative analysis** of the transcribed session.
  - The research team then tabled themes, codes, and exemplar quotes.
- **The data tables were presented during a RoR.**
  - Attended by 5 of 6 participants
- IRB ethics review was obtained.





# RESULTS

- Qualitative analysis revealed five primary themes encapsulating the intersectional experience of peri- and post-menopausal women:
  - healthcare,
  - symptoms,
  - individual experience,
  - Disabilities



# RESULTS

- Healthcare

- “You go to the doctor, and the doctors say, “Oh, maybe you have depression. Take this medicine” and you start taking the medicine. “Oh, no, maybe you have anxiety” and it gives you anxiety. They give give you a little medicine for your symptoms, but it’s not a whole thing. And you continue to feel miserable.”
- “I think as health care providers we need to make more effort in using non-traditional ways to reach community members... people know our communities are stuck.”

- Symptoms

- “But it’s not just hot flashes. It’s a change of mood, it’s depression. Thoughts of depression, getting mad all the time, and you cannot sleep. You cannot. You gain weight, you cry. There are a lot of things at the same time.”

# RESULTS

- Individual experience
  - “I’m willing to fight the fight for my health...if you wanna be a leader, or if you wanna change people’s lives, I think those are the fights we should be willing to fight.”
  - “You can advocate for yourself when you don’t even know what is going on with you.
- Disabilities
  - “This is really weird, all my symptoms. And I know if it’s because of the post-polio, you know. Probably made it worse.”
- Connectivity
  - “Thinking about information to our most vulnerable sisters...our most vulnerable friends, family members going through menopause or perimenopause, and not even knowing what they’re going through.”
  - “We have this in common and just that commonality creates a sense of womanhood, sisterhood, you know all those things that I think are profound.

# RESULTS

Contributions to these themes included personal narratives, shared stories, collaborative insights, and individual perspectives. Participants emphasized the urgent need for increased research, awareness, and support for individuals navigating the diverse aspects of this life transition.

# IMPLICATIONS

- The study's results highlight the active engagement of participants in both the research and dissemination processes. They underscore the pressing need for enhanced education regarding peri- and post-menopausal transitions, symptomatology, systemic challenges, and accessible interventions. This study contributes to the broader discourse on women's health by shedding light on the complex interplay of intersecting identities during menopause, thus advocating for a more inclusive and informed approach to menopausal care and support.

# CURRENT DIRECTIONS - MENOGAP

- **MENOGAP**
  - Pilot starting next month
- **LatinaMENOGAP: Mujeres en Transicion**
  - 1U4U funded adaptation for Hispanic women
- **IndigenousMENOGAP: Waning Moon**
  - VPR funded adaptation for Indigenous/Native women
- **CancerMENOGAP**
  - Pilot work with colleagues at University of Puerto Rico Cancer Center
- **PacificIslanderMENOGAP**
  - Emergent possibility: Native Hawaiian



LISA.TAYLOR-SWANSON@NURS.UTAH.EDU

