



STEAM

VA Strategies to Educate and Address Menopause

NEWSLETTER

January 2015

Welcome to the first edition of our VA STEAM monthly newsletter!

What is VA STEAM?

VA STEAM stands for VA Strategies To Educate and Address Menopause. It is important for patients to understand the symptoms of menopause, treatments for those symptoms, changes they can anticipate, and what they should expect in the future. We seek to assist women and their primary care providers in becoming better informed on this topic. Women during any stage of menopause should feel comfortable speaking to their primary care team about this subject and know that they are not alone during this transition.

Thank you for your service and we hope you have a wonderful new year.

Dr. Silvina Levis, MD
 Dr. Panagiota Caralis, MD, JD
 Dr. Remberto Rodriguez, MD
 Tatiana Mijares-Cantrell, MSW

- ❖ **This newsletter will be uploaded monthly to our websites and this will be the only paper version you will receive via mail.**
- ❖ If you have a topic that should be discussed please let us know! We are here to inform and serve you. Our contact information is located on the back page of the newsletter.
- ❖ Please check our websites often for newsletters, new information on menopause, and events:

www.menopause.varesearchfoundation.com

<http://www.miami.va.gov/menopause>

Important Dates

2/28th.....Heart Health
 Event

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Heart Health

Menopause Resources

www.hormone.org/menopausemap/

Endocrine Society Menopause Map. This site will ask you questions to help you determine which stage of menopause you are in and gives a list of questions to ask your doctor about menopause.

Meno Pro App

North American Menopause Society iPhone and iPad App. This tool helps select treatment options (hormonal, non-hormonal, lifestyle changes) that can improve symptoms, determine risks for each treatment you may have, and how to discuss treatments and risks with your healthcare provider. To download simply go to the app store on your smartphone and type Meno Pro.

Menopause Day Event



On Saturday, November 8th, 2014, VA STEAM hosted our first Menopause Day! We had 33 participants from Miami-Dade, Monroe, and Broward counties make the trip for a morning filled with valuable information.

Dr. Levis explained what menopause is and treatment options (both natural and medical) for those who have bothersome symptoms. We had yoga and mindfulness demonstrations which could be used to alleviate the severity of menopausal symptoms. Ms. Jan Dapprich gave a wonderful presentation on the MOVE! Program and why it is important to stay active in the years during and following menopause. We also provided information on My HealthVet as well as assisted Veterans in enrolling in the online program. Miami VA Healthcare System provided transportation from the Broward clinic for all those who wished to attend.

During this new year we will roll out educational opportunities for women veterans, CHAMP VA, as well as primary health care team members and women's health providers on subjects pertaining to the health of women over the age of 45. This will include heart health, bone health, and mental health. In fact, we will be hosting

a heart health event on February 28th (an invitation is included with this newsletter) . Stay tuned for more!



What is Menopause?

Menopause is a natural event in every woman's life. It refers to the time when a woman's menstrual periods stop and she is no longer able to become pregnant. A woman reaches menopause when she has not had a period for 12 months. This usually occurs around the age of 51 but can happen at any point in her 40's or 50's; women who smoke tend to have their last period at a younger age. As menopause approaches, a woman's ovaries make less of the female hormones estrogen and progesterone. Over time (about 3 to 5 years), her ovaries only make small amounts of

estrogen and completely stop making progesterone.

There are three stages in menopause:

Peri-menopause: This is when women begin to feel the symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, trouble sleeping and irregular periods.

Menopause: This occurs when a woman has not had a period for 12 months.

Post Menopause: Women may continue to have symptoms and are at risk of heart disease and weaker bones (osteoporosis).

Tip: If you find it hard to talk with your providers about menopause check our websites for a list of questions you can ask them to start the conversation.

www.menopause.varesearchfoundation.com

www.miami.va.gov/menopause

Symptoms

Irregular periods. Cycles can occur more or less frequently and also result in shorter, longer, heavier or lighter periods.

Hot flashes or flushes. This symptom is a sudden feeling of heat in the upper body or throughout and are often accompanied by profuse sweat.

Night sweats. Night sweats are hot flashes that occur during sleep and usually result in disrupted sleep.

Trouble sleeping. Women may find it harder to fall asleep and/or stay asleep through the entire night.

Vaginal Dryness. Lower estrogen levels make vagina walls drier and thinner, cause itching or discomfort and could result uncomfortable or even painful sexual intercourse.

Changing feelings about sex. Some women

find they feel less aroused during menopause and lose interest altogether while others feel more comfortable with their sexuality.

Mood changes. Women may experience mood swings, feel irritated, or have crying spells. Changes in mood can be caused by stress or feeling tired. Mood swings and depression are not the same thing.

Osteoporosis. This condition occurs when bones become thin and weak. It can lead to loss of height and broken bones.

Other changes. Women may experience forgetfulness or have problems focusing, weight gain, and may have stiff or achy joints.

For a more in depth list of symptoms and ways to treat them, please visit our websites today!

Meet the Staff

Dr. Silvina Levis, MD



Silvina Levis, MD is leading the STEAM program at the Miami VA Healthcare System. Her work focuses on improving women's health as they age. She provides clinical care, patient and professional education, and conducts clinical research. Dr. Levis has studied the effect of soy-derived hormones in menopause and of several medications to prevent osteoporosis.

Dr. Levis is Acting Associate Director for Clinical Affairs in the Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center at the Miami Veterans Affairs Medical Center and Professor of Medicine at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. She is member of several medical professional organizations and serves in the VA's Women's Health Research Based Practice Network and in a grant review committee at the National Institutes of Health.

VA Links

www.miami.va.gov/services/women

The Miami VA Women's Health Page

www.myhealth.va.gov

The My HealthVet page. You can learn all the ways it can help you stay connected to your healthcare team, how to enroll, reorder medications, etc.

Contact Info:

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Tatiana Mijares-Cantrell, MSW

Tatiana is a lifelong resident of South Florida. After receiving a Bachelors of Religion from Presbyterian College in 2006, Tatiana spent the first few years of her career working with youth and family service nonprofit organizations. She then transitioned to working with senior citizens. Her work with these vulnerable populations inspired her to go back to school. She received a Masters in Social Work from Florida International University in 2012. While in graduate school, Tatiana interned with the Miami VA Healthcare Systems where she developed a passion for working with the veteran population. She was thrilled to return to the VA as a Project Manager with the VA STEAM program shortly after her graduation.

