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**Title:** Role of health volunteers in educating women about menopausal health; results of an interventional study

**Authors:** Kaveh M. H.*, Pouralimohammadi N., Najafi A., Tabatabaii H., Keshavarz T.

**Abstract:** Background and objective: Today, due to increased life expectancy, women live at least one third of their lives in menopausal period. This period of life is usually accompanied with some early and late undesirable changes, which lead to decline in women's quality of daily livings. Self care education to women during menopause or before through partnership of health volunteers seems an appropriate but a needed strategy. Searches to find relevant literature showed few Studies conducted in this field. This study, therefore, was carried out to evaluate the impact of a self-care training, delivered by health volunteers, on women's knowledge and practice about menopause health. This is done in public health centers of Shiraz city, Iran, 2009.

Materials and methods: Among the 70 centers affiliated with Shiraz's health district eight health centers were randomly selected. 48 healthy volunteers (six volunteers in each center) were selected randomly. They, then, were randomly assigned to intervention and comparison groups. 480 women among women covered by health volunteers (10 women per volunteer) randomly chosen target audience, as well. At first, health volunteers were trained through a two-day workshop. The health volunteers, then, were asked to teach the instructional content to the women. A written test to measure knowledge of women before and one month after intervention was implemented training for them. Changes in the women's knowledge, as an index of health volunteers practice, were measured before and one month after intervention by using a written test. Research data were processed and analyzed, using nonparametric tests (Wilcoxon and Mann Whitney), in SPSS statistical software, version 11.5.

Results: Few women in the study groups (2 and 12 women in the intervention and comparison groups, respectively) due to some reasons (death of spouse, traveling and not available at the time of the posttest) were excluded from the study. More women in the intervention group (50.80) and comparison group (47.20), had secondary school certificates. Pre-test findings showed a low level of knowledge about menopause among studied women. The average pre-test scores of knowledge of women in case and control groups were 12.37 and 15.15, respectively. Posttest findings (done one month after the intervention) showed that knowledge of women in the experimental group (mean=25.36, SD=3.39) significantly improved, in comparison with pretest findings (p<0.001). Knowledge of women in the comparison group at posttest (mean = 14.89) was not significantly different from their knowledge at pretest.

Conclusion: findings of this research support the effectiveness of health volunteers' role in educating women about menopausal health, and suggest this as a useful strategy for empowering community women for their health.

**Health volunteers, menopausal health, women, empowerment, knowledge, practice**

**Presentation:** Oral