

## **Increasing female life expectancy and its consequences: importance of understanding post-menopausal health issues**

SAYN Subasinghe<sup>1</sup>

Declining fertility and mortality were the main two factors which affected the increase of life expectancy in Sri Lanka, which over the years has improved rapidly. At present, female life expectancy in Sri Lanka is 77 years, a level similar to many developed countries. As a result, a woman lives through approximately 25-30 years of post-menopausal period, after completing their reproductive life. Menopause is the cessation of the menstruation and is a part of the natural aging process for women. Post-menopausal period begins one year after a woman has had her last menstrual period. Although menopause occurs between the ages of 45 to 55 years, especially in developing countries, women can go through this process at an earlier age. Menopause can cause some symptoms related to physical and mental health of women that may affect their quality of life. The main objective of this paper is to examine the post-menopausal related health issues in the context of increasing life expectancy using existing literature on the subject. The analysis mainly discusses the importance of understanding post-menopausal health issues of women in terms of their physical and mental health in order to enhance quality of life until the end of their lifespan. It is evident that in many cases a woman experiences her menopause together with chronic diseases and while holding multiple social and family responsibilities. This situation creates vulnerability with regard to physical and mental wellbeing of women. It is also found that health issues faced by the women at the post-menopausal stage vary and are associated with their demographic and socio-economic factors. The common health issues faced by them include heart palpitations, night sweats and sleep disturbances, fatigue, poor concentration, irritability, mood changes, and skin irritation. These findings suggest that specially designed reproductive health education related programmes should be implemented to enhance post-menopausal health outcomes of women.

**Keywords:** *Life expectancy, post-menopausal health, women's health problems*

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<sup>1</sup>Department of Demography, University of Colombo

*Acknowledgement: Author would like to thank Dr. E L Sunethra J Perera, the supervisor and the University of Colombo for providing research grant (AP/3/2/2014/RG/15) to undertake this research.*