The specialist authority for menopause & post reproductive health

BMS statement on the Government response to the Women and Equalities Committee's report into menopause

The British Menopause Society has reviewed the Government's response to the Women and Equalities Committee report into the menopause.

Whist we recognise that some of the responses could be disappointing, the BMS believes that these discussions overall, are likely to have a positive effect on the provision of menopause care in the UK. There are many examples of acceptance in principle, starting with **Recommendation 1**.

The BMS has long advocated the dissemination of good quality and accurate information about menopause to support women to navigate this life stage. In addition to educating healthcare professionals on all aspects of post reproductive health, Women's Health Concern, the patient facing arm of the society, supports women.

Recommendation 2 relates to GP education and has been accepted in part.
We feel that this is reasonable as there exists a wealth of peer reviewed training materials to support clinicians from primary and secondary care.
We collaborate with the relevant Royal Colleges and our goal is to not only educate but to mentor and support which we feel is a preferable route for adult learners.

Recommendation 3 is not currently supported by the Government, but we must bear in mind recent changes to the structure of primary care and publication of the Women's Health Strategy, which Professor Dame Lesley Regan is leading on as the Women's Health Ambassador.

The goals set out in the Women and Equalities Committee report into the menopause are high and would have been difficult to achieve in a short space of time with the many challenges currently facing the National Health Service.

We appreciate the challenges in General Practice, hence our willingness to support primary care unreservedly to optimise the outcome for patients experiencing the menopause.

Much can be achieved through close collaboration and communication with doctors, nurses and pharmacists working in primary care and some of these clinicians will have a particular interest in women's health.

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Recommendation 4 aims to ensure that lower cost HRT prescriptions are issued and dispensed and has been partly accepted by the government. A single cost annual charge could help women living on low incomes, who might otherwise choose to prioritise other family members, rather than themselves. However, following initiation of HRT in eligible women requesting treatment, an initial 3-month review is recommended.

Recommendation 5, which commits to removing dual prescription charges for all women and the development of a National Formulary has been accepted in part. The BMS welcomed the appointment of the HRT Tsar and although it was clear that the appointment was short term, it was a pity that this recommendation had not been further progressed before Maddie McTernan returned to the vaccine taskforce. Women using sequential HRT are financially disadvantaged at present and a National Formulary would improve access to many more recently licensed products with unique potential benefits.

Recommendation 6 focusses on support in the workplace for women experiencing the menopause, which the government accepts in principle. Much has been achieved already with more open communication, menopause forums, policies and staff clinics facilitated by NHS employers mostly.

Recommendation 7, the model menopause policy has not been accepted by the government, but much of this is already being achieved in recommendation 6.
Since the inception of the Taskforce, there have been many changes made by a range of employers, to support experienced women to remain a vital part of the workforce if that's what they want to do.

Recommendation 8 suggests working with a large public sector employer with a public profile to develop a "menopause leave" policy and has not been agreed with the government. Despite this, many employers are more flexible due to the current economic crisis, making it less problematic for employees, irrespective of the reason, to request unpaid leave.

The government has accepted **Recommendation 9** in support of flexible working.

There are recommendations for legal reform **(Recommendations 10-12),** some of which are not within the remit of the BMS to comment on.