

## Awareness of Uterine Prolapse in Premenopausal Women

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### Abstract

**Aim:** To study the awareness of uterine prolapse in premenopausal women

**Objectives:** To study whether women are aware of

- I. what is uterine prolapse
- II. risk factors of uterine prolapse
- III. symptoms of uterine prolapse
- IV. investigations for uterine prolapse
- V. treatment options for uterine prolapse
- VI. physiotherapy for uterine prolapse

### Methods:

A questionnaire-based survey was conducted amongst 61 premenopausal women

### Results:

Descriptive analysis showed that awareness of uterine prolapse was 57%. Only 18% women were aware about menopause as a risk factor for uterine prolapse. Obesity was found to be the least known risk factor for uterine prolapse. Majority of the women, that is 54% were unaware about the symptoms of uterine prolapse. Surgery was the most known treatment option (54%) for uterine prolapse. Only 11.47% of women knew what could be the complications of uterine prolapse. Very few women, 20% knew the exercises for preventing uterine prolapse and even less, 11% practiced them.

### Conclusion:

The study highlighted the need to conduct awareness programs for uterine prolapse as well as risk factors, symptoms, investigations, treatment options and physiotherapy related to it.

**Keywords:** prolapse, uterine prolapse, pelvic floor, menopause, premenopausal women

## Introduction

In India, subjects related to reproductive health are often less talked about or are sometimes considered taboo. Specially, females are ashamed to share their intimate problems. Hence, many times it is seen that women approach medical facilities when such problems advance to such a stage that they are not ignorable any more.

A female body goes through monthly cycles which are lead by hormonal level variations and are important for the reproductive function. It is called as Menstruation. It is visible manifestation of cyclic physiologic uterine bleeding due to shedding of the endometrium.<sup>1</sup>

When this monthly cycle occurs for the final and last time in the female's body, it is called as Menopause. It is permanent cessation of menstruation at the end of reproductive life due to loss of ovarian follicular activity. The age of menopause ranges between 45 to 55 years, average being 50 years.<sup>1</sup>

The age at which menopause occurs is genetically predetermined. It is seen that Indian women attain menopause 3 to 5 years earlier than in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

Time period prior to the menopause, is called as premenopausal phase.<sup>2</sup>

The *pelvis* is the lower part of the trunk of the human body between the abdomen and the thighs.

Organs in the female pelvis include the bladder, uterus and cervix and rectum (last part of the intestine). Uterus (the birth sac) and vagina (the birth canal) are two of the main reproductive organs in a female body. These organs are supported by numerous structures, an important one being the pelvic floor. The pelvic floor is composed of several muscle layers with attachments to surrounding bones. It acts as a sling, to support the organs in the pelvis.

Uterine prolapse i.e., descent of the uterus occurs when the pelvic floor muscles are stretched and weakened, resulting in inadequate support for the uterus. The uterus then descends into or protrudes out of the vagina. Damage to the tissues of the body during pregnancy and childbirth, effects of gravity, deficiency of the hormone oestrogen and repeated straining weaken the pelvic floor and lead to uterine prolapse<sup>1,2</sup>. It can occur in women of any age, but commonly affects women who have already had their menopause and have undergone one or more vaginal childbirths.<sup>3,4</sup>

It causes women to suffer from considerable discomfort and consequently, disrupts their normal life. Along with physical discomfort, patients with uterine prolapse also face social stigma associated with it.

Hence, many women find it difficult to confide in anyone about these problems or discuss them openly.

Considering this scenario, it is important to find out what is the proportion of women in the society, who are aware of this medical condition of uterine prolapse. It becomes even more important to know how many premenopausal women are aware about it, as they are progressing towards the stage of life, in which they are more likely to suffer from this condition.

Along with knowledge of the condition, women also ought to know the risk factors, symptoms, investigations for diagnosis, treatment options and preventive measures for uterine prolapse. Knowledge about the symptoms can lead the patient to approach medical care providers at the initial stage of the conditions, thus preventing progression and complications. There are some known factors, which can lead to uterine prolapse. Also, there are some exercises for strengthening the pelvic floor muscles, which might prevent uterine prolapse.

This study attempted to assess the proportion of premenopausal women who are aware about uterine prolapse as a condition, as well as knowledge of the risk factors, symptoms, diagnostic methods, treatment options and preventive measures about it.

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**Objectives:** To find out whether premenopausal women are aware of

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- V. treatment options for uterine prolapse
- VI. physiotherapy for uterine prolapse

### **Materials and method:**

In the present study, authors aimed at finding out the awareness of uterine prolapse in premenopausal women. The objectives were to know whether the women were aware of what is uterine prolapse and the risk factors, symptoms, investigations, treatment options and physiotherapy for uterine prolapse.

The study was conducted on 61 premenopausal women. The study design used was purposive sampling technique. The inclusion criteria for subjects were women between the age group of 40 years to 55 years and women who did not have menopause yet. Subjects who were excluded from the study were women working as healthcare professionals, women diagnosed with uterine prolapse and postmenopausal women.

## Procedure

A self-designed questionnaire containing questions related to the objectives of the project was formulated. Face validation of the questionnaire was done from experts in the field. It mainly consisted of questions regarding menopause, risk factors, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of uterine prolapse.

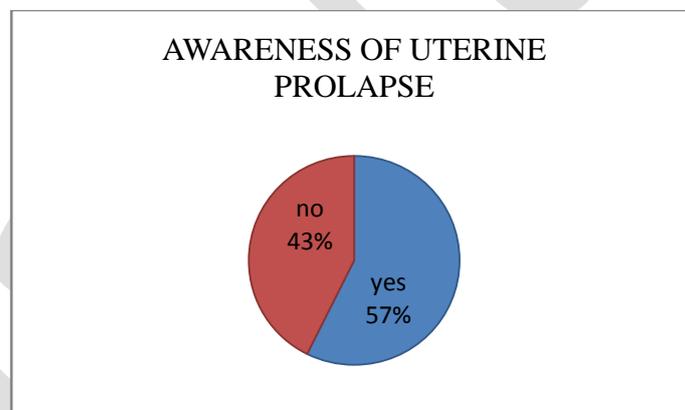
Study setting included residential areas and hospitals in Pune city.

Subjects who fulfilled the selection criteria were explained the need of the study. The purpose of the study and the questionnaire was then explained in the language they understood the best. Their written consent was taken and they were asked to fill the questionnaire.

The data acquired through the questionnaires was compiled, entered in Microsoft excel sheet and was depicted in graphical formats. The graphs were then analysed and discussed. At the end, conclusion was drawn.

## Results

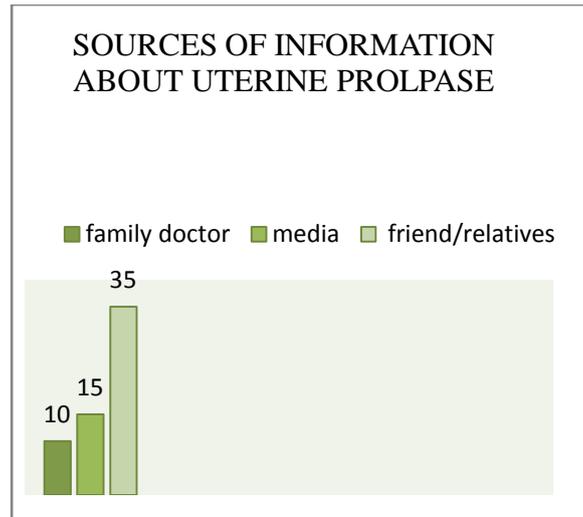
### RESULT1: AWARENESS OF UTERINE PROLAPSE



Out of 61 subjects, 57% were aware of uterine prolapse.

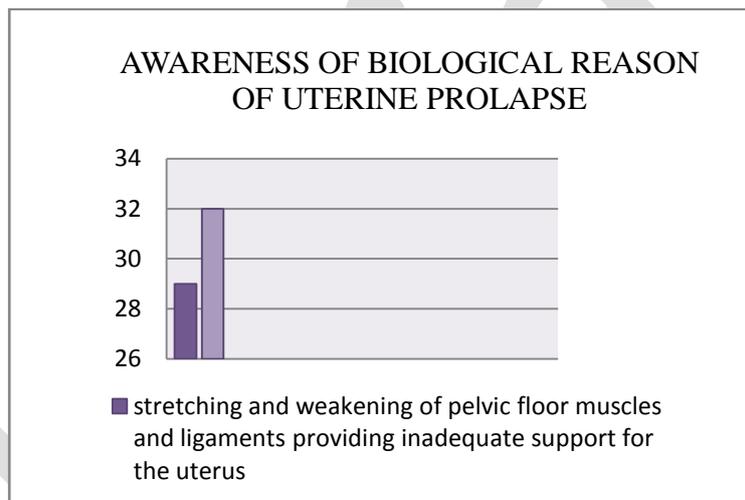
Remaining 43% were not aware of uterine prolapse.

### RESULT2: SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT UTERINE PROLAPSE



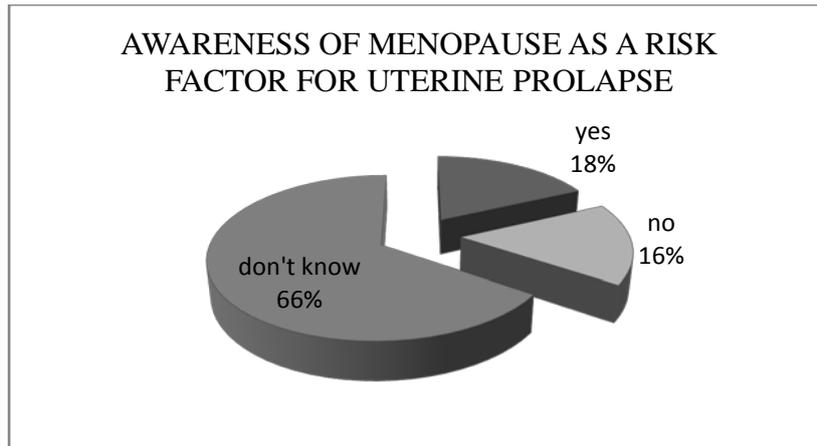
Friends\relatives (57.37%) was found to be the most common source of information about uterine prolapse, followed media (24.59%) and family doctor (16.39%).

**RESULT3: AWARENESS OF BIOLOGICAL REASON OF UTERINE PROLAPSE**



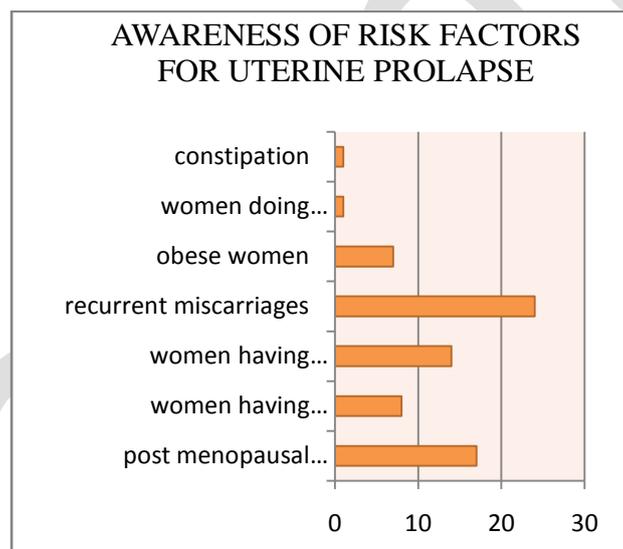
Out of 61 subjects, 52.45% were aware of the scientific reason of uterine prolapse. Remaining 47.55% were not aware of the scientific reason of uterine prolapse.

**RESULT 4: AWARENESS OF MENOPAUSE AS A RISK FACTOR FOR UTERINE PROLAPSE**



Out of 61 subjects, 18% were aware of menopause being a risk factor for uterine prolapse. 16% reported that menopause isn't a risk factor for uterine prolapse. And remaining 66% didn't know whether menopause is a risk factor for uterine prolapse.

**RESULT5: AWARENESS OF RISK FACTORS FOR UTERINE PROLAPSE**

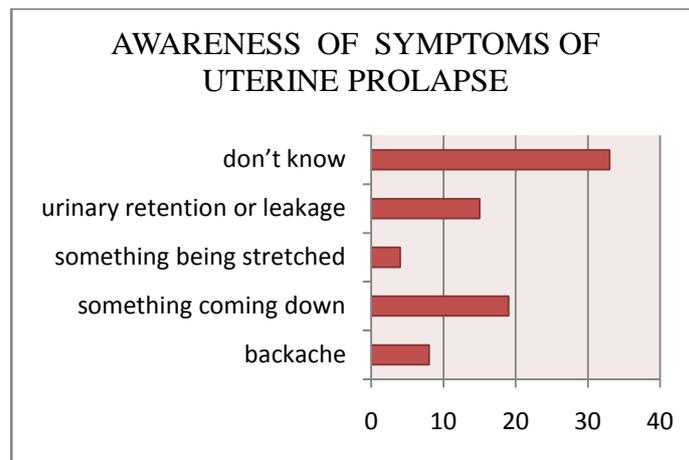


Maximum awareness was about recurrent miscarriages (39.34%), followed by menopause (27.86%) and multiparity (22.95%) and uterine fibroids (13.11%).

Least awareness was about obesity (11.47%).

Subjects also reported constipation (1.63%) and doing laborious work (1.63%) as risk factors for uterine prolapse.

**RESULT6: AWARENESS OF SYMPTOMS OF UTERINE PROLAPSE**

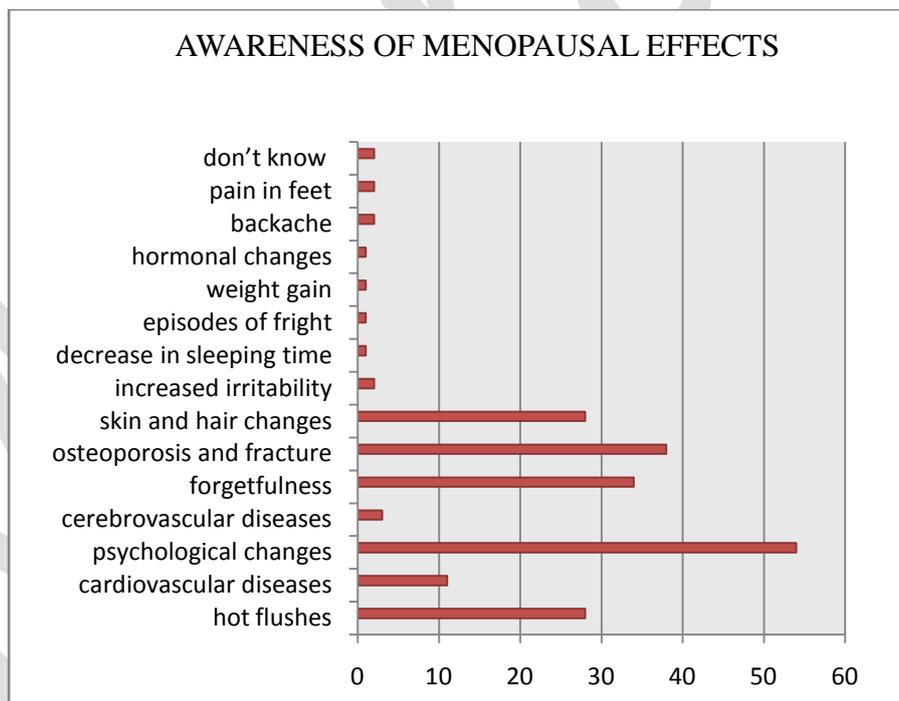


Maximum awareness was about the feeling of something coming down (31.14 %) followed by urinary retention or leakage (24.59%) and backache (13.11%).

Least awareness was about something being stretched (6.55%).

Out of 61 subjects, 54.09% were unaware of the symptoms of uterine prolapse.

#### RESULT 7: AWARENESS OF MENOPAUSAL EFFECTS

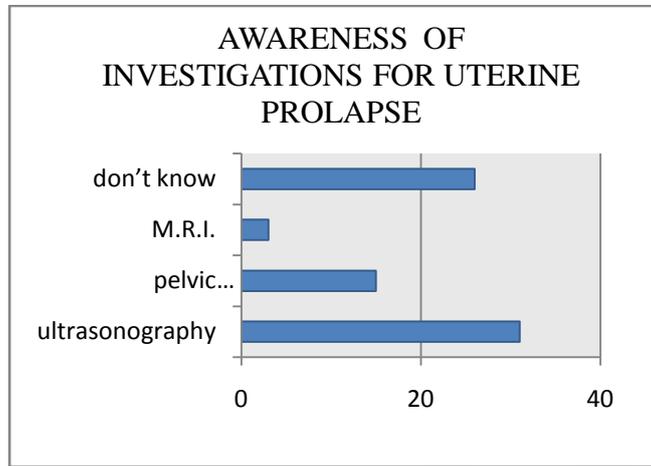


Maximum awareness was about psychological changes(88.52%) followed by osteoporosis and fracture(62.29%), forgetfulness(55.73%), hot flushes (45.90%), skin and hair changes (45.90%) and cardiovascular diseases (18.03%).Least awareness was about cerebrovascular diseases (4.91%).

Some women also reported other effects such as pain in feet (3.27%), backache (3.27%), episodes of fright (1.63%), decrease in sleeping time (1.63%), weight gain (1.63%), hormonal changes (1.63%), and increased irritability (3.27%).

3.27% of women were found to be unaware of the effects of menopause.

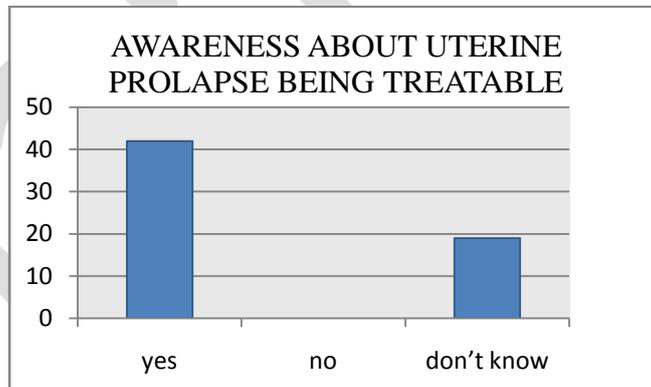
**RESULT 8: AWARENESS OF INVESTIGATIONS FOR UTERINE PROLAPSE**



Maximum awareness was about ultrasonography (50.81%) followed by pelvic examination (24.59%) and M.R.I.(4.98%).

Out of 61 subjects 42.62% were unaware of the investigations for uterine prolapse.

**RESULT 9: AWARENESS ABOUT UTERINE PROLAPSE BEING TREATABLE**

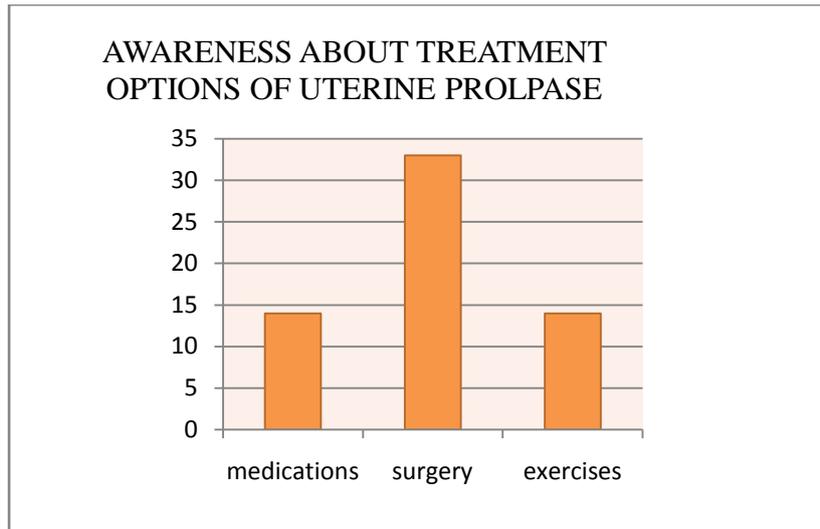


Out of 61 subjects, 68.85% reported that uterine prolapse was treatable.

31.14% were not aware whether it's treatable.

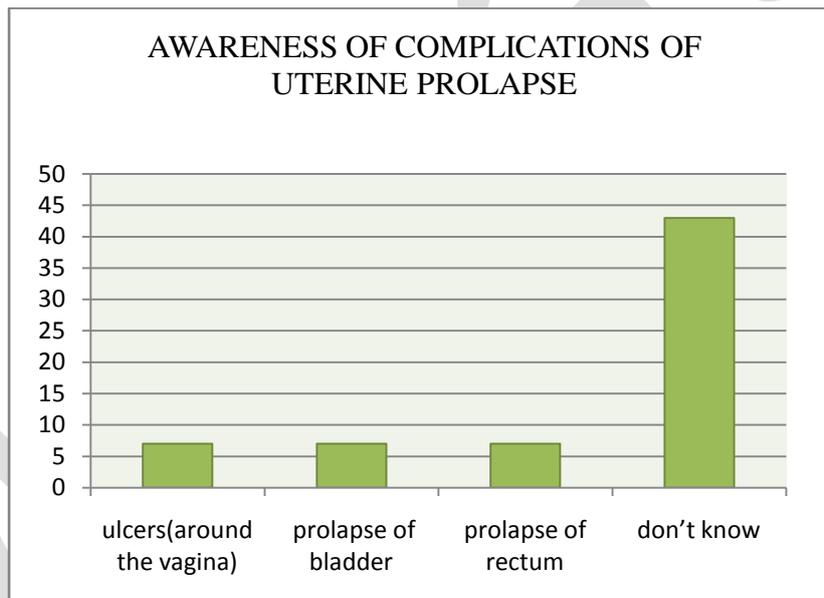
None of the subjects reported uterine prolapse as untreatable.

**RESULT 10: AWARENESS ABOUT TREATMENT OPTIONS OF UTERINE PROLAPSE**



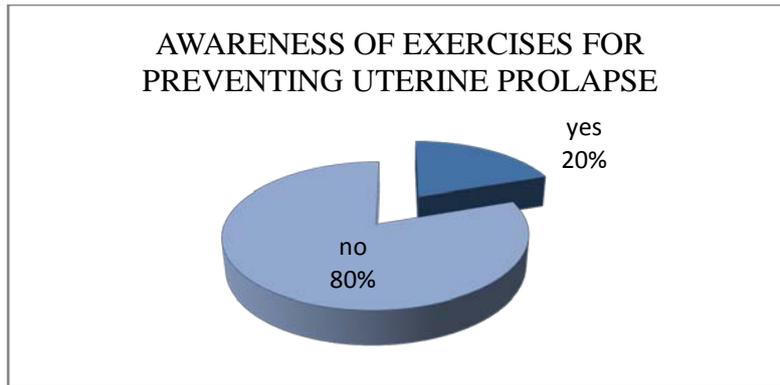
Maximum awareness was about surgery (54.09%), followed by medications (22.95%) and exercises (22.95%).

### RESULT 11: AWARENESS OF COMPLICATIONS OF UTERINE PROLAPSE



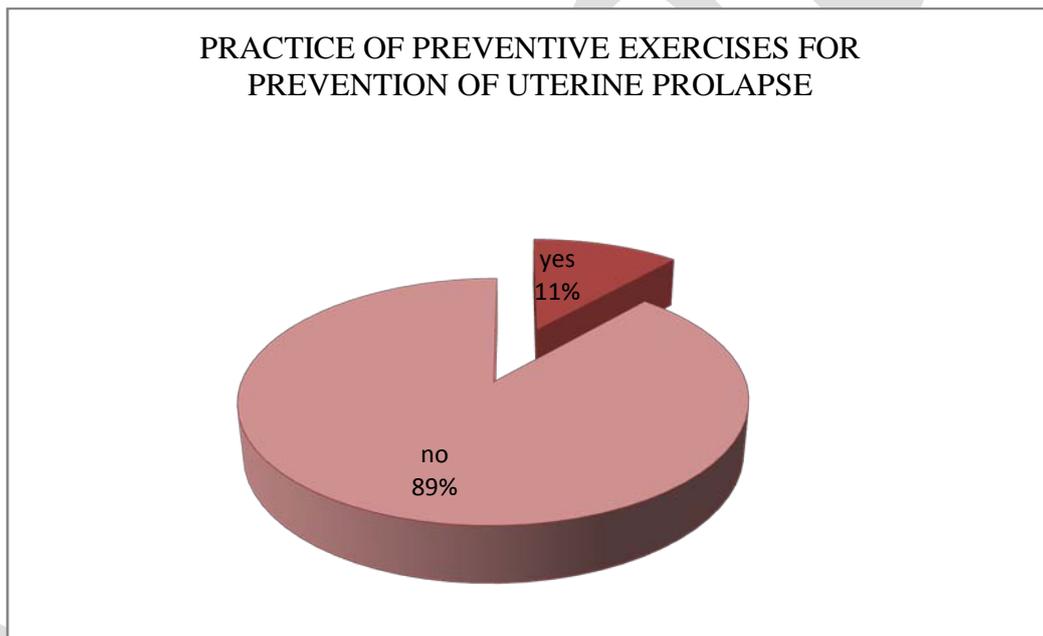
Out of 61 subjects, 11.47% were aware of ulcers, prolapse of bladder and prolapse of rectum. 70.49% subjects were unaware of the complications of uterine prolapse.

### RESULT 12: AWARENESS OF EXERCISES FOR PREVENTING UTERINE PROLAPSE



Out of 61 subjects 20% were aware of the exercises for preventing uterine prolapse. Remaining 80% were not aware of the exercises for preventing uterine prolapse.

**RESULT 13:PRACTICE OF PREVENTIVE EXERCISES FOR PREVENTION UTERINE PROLAPSE**



Out of 61 subjects only 11% practiced exercises for preventing uterine prolapse and remaining 89% didn't practice exercises for preventing uterine prolapse.

**Discussion**

### AWARENESS OF UTERINE PROLAPSE

Result 1 depicts that 57% of the subjects were aware of uterine prolapse. These women may have had better exposure to mass media and they knew about effects of menopause.

Remaining 43% of the subjects were not aware of uterine prolapse. This can be attributed to the fact that 3.27% of the study population was unaware of menopausal effects and 15% of the study population had not heard about uterine prolapse.<sup>5,6</sup>

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT UTERINE PROLAPSE

Result 2 depicts that friends/ relatives(57.37%) was found to be the most common source of information about uterine prolapse, followed by media(24.59%) and family doctor(16.39%). This could be due to easy accessibility and frankness while exchanging information with friends and relatives. Many women get diverse information about menopause from mass media than professional advice.<sup>7</sup>

### AWARENESS OF BIOLOGICAL REASON OF UTERINE PROLAPSE

Result 3 depicts that 52.45% of the subjects were aware of the biological reason (scientific reason) of uterine prolapse. As these women were more conscious about health issues and were more interested in acquiring knowledge about health related issues, they were aware about the scientific reason of uterine prolapse.

47.55% of the subjects were not aware of the scientific reason uterine prolapse. This could be due to lower level of education, lack of exposure to social media or they may be ignorant about women's health issues. Fear of humiliation inhibits women's care-seeking behaviour about private problems<sup>8</sup>. Lesser information is also associated with low education and low socio-economic background<sup>9</sup>.

### AWARENESS OF MENOPAUSE AS A RISK FACTOR FOR UTERINE PROLAPSE

Result 4 depicts percentage of awareness of menopause as a risk factor for uterine prolapse.

18% of the subjects were aware of menopause being a risk factor for uterine prolapse. This can be due to higher incidences of uterine prolapse in postmenopausal women.<sup>1,2</sup>

16% reported that menopause is not a risk factor for uterine prolapse.

And remaining 66% did not know whether menopause is a risk factor for uterine prolapse. This can be due to lack of awareness of effects of menopause, lack of awareness of uterine prolapse and in turn it's risk factors.<sup>10</sup>

### AWARENESS OF MENOPAUSAL EFFECTS

Result 5 depicts percentages of menopausal effects which were known to the subjects. They are as follows-Psychological changes (88.52%), osteoporosis and fracture (62.29%), forgetfulness (55.73%), hot flushes (45.09%), skin and hair changes (45.09%), cardiovascular diseases (18.03%) and cerebrovascular diseases (4.91%).

So as it can be seen, psychological changes, osteoporosis and fracture, forgetfulness, hot flushes, skin and hair changes were relatively more known to the study population. This is attributed to the fact that effects like hot flushes, osteoporosis and fracture etc are seen more commonly in the general population.<sup>11</sup>

Subjects were least aware of cerebrovascular diseases as an effect of menopause. This is because of lesser incidence of this effect in general population<sup>12</sup>.

3.27% of women were found to be unaware of the effects of menopause. This can be due to lack of exposure to media providing information about the topic.

Minority of the study population also reported other effects such as pain in feet(3.27%),backache(3.27%), increased irritability(3.27%), episodes of fright(1.63%), decrease in sleeping time((1.63%) and hormonal changes(1.63%).This is attributed to lesser initiative taken by the subjects to think about other effects and report them.

### AWARENESS OF RISK FACTORS FOR UTERINE PROLAPSE

Result 6 depicts the percentages of risk factors for uterine prolapse that were known to the subject population. They are as follows- recurrent miscarriages (39.34%), menopause (27.86%), multiparity (22.95%), obesity (11.47%) and uterine fibroids (13.11%)

So relatively, subjects were more aware of recurrent miscarriages, menopause and multiparity as risk factors for uterine prolapse because of the understanding of obvious fact that miscarriage and multiparity would lead to increased stress on the uterus and supporting ligaments leading to higher incidence of uterine prolapse.<sup>1,2</sup> Awareness of menopause as a risk factor can be related to higher incidence of uterine prolapse in post menopausal women and awareness of the effects of menopause.

The lesser awareness of obesity as a risk factor can be attributed to the difficulty in associating these two conditions and lack awareness of effects of obesity.<sup>13</sup>

Least awareness as a risk factor of uterine prolapse was of uterine fibroids. This can be due to lower incidence of uterine fibroids in post menopausal women and hence lesser awareness about their effects in women. The incidence of uterine fibroids decreases with advancing age in postmenopausal women.Minority of the study population also reported constipation (1.63%) and doing laborious work as risk factors for uterine prolapse. <sup>14, 15</sup>.

### AWARENESS OF SYMPTOMS OF UTERINE PROLAPSE

Result 7 depicts percentages of symptoms of uterine prolapse known to the subjects.

They are as follows- feeling of something coming down (31.14%), urinary retention or leakage (24.59%), backache (13.11%) and feeling of something being stretched (6.55%).

So there was relatively more awareness about the feeling of something coming down and urinary retention or leakage. This can be because these symptoms are commonly experienced by general population these symptoms.<sup>10,11</sup>

In my study lesser awareness was found about backache and feeling of something being stretched. 54.09% of the subjects were found to be unaware of the symptoms of uterine prolapse. This can be due to being unaware of uterine prolapse and lesser exposure to informative media.

### AWARENESS OF INVESTIGATIONS FOR UTERINE PROLAPSE

Result 8 depicts awareness of investigations for uterine prolapse. They are as follows- Ultrasonography (50.81%), pelvic examination (24.59%) and M.R.I. (4.91%).

Relatively there was more awareness about ultrasonography and pelvic examination. This is attributed to the use of ultrasonography and pelvic examination during pregnancy health check ups<sup>16</sup>. So, most of the women know about these investigations.

42.62% of the subjects were unaware of the investigations carried out for the diagnosis of uterine prolapse. This is attributed to lesser awareness of uterine prolapse

### AWARENESS ABOUT UTERINE PROLAPSE BEING TREATABLE

This result depicts the percentages of opinions of subjects about treatment of uterine prolapse.

68.85% of the subjects reported that uterine prolapse was treatable. This is due to availability of various treatment options for uterine prolapse.<sup>15</sup>

31.14% didn't know whether it is treatable. This can be because of lack of awareness about uterine prolapse and in turn treatment availability.

In my study none of the subjects reported uterine prolapse as untreatable. This can be due to recent advancements in the field of medical sciences and availability of treatment options.

### AWARENESS ABOUT TREATMENT OPTIONS OF UTERINE PROLAPSE

This graph depicts the percentages of awareness about treatment options of uterine prolapse.

They are as follows. Surgery (54.09%), medications (22.95%) and exercises (22.95%).

There is maximum awareness was about surgery owing to higher success rate of these surgeries (65-90%)<sup>27</sup>. There was relatively lower awareness of medications and exercises as treatment options due to lesser use of exercises as a treatment intervention and also because exercise as a treatment intervention receives lesser compliance and hence is lesser known about<sup>17</sup>.

#### AWARENESS OF COMPLICATIONS OF UTERINE PROLAPSE

Result 11 depicts percentages of complications of uterine prolapse that were known to the subjects. They are as follows- Ulcers around the vagina (11.47%) prolapse of bladder (11.47%) and prolapse of rectum (11.47%). Overall, there was lesser awareness because women are hesitant about disclosing their private problems and lesser occurrence rates<sup>15, 18</sup>.

70.49% subjects were unaware of the complications of uterine prolapse. This is attributed to lack of awareness of uterine prolapse and hence its complications.

#### AWARENESS OF EXERCISES FOR PREVENTING UTERINE PROLAPSE

Result 12 depicts percentage of awareness of exercises for preventing uterine prolapse.

20% of the subjects were aware of exercises for preventing uterine prolapse. This can be due to their health conscious nature, exposure to media, and exposure to population suffering from uterine prolapse.<sup>5,9</sup>

Remaining 80% were not aware of the exercises for preventing uterine prolapse. In my study it was found that 43% of the study population was not aware about uterine prolapse and hence didn't know about its prophylactic measures.

#### PRACTICE OF PREVENTIVE EXERCISES FOR UTERINE PROLAPSE

This result shows percentage of practice of preventive exercises for uterine prolapse by the subjects.

11% of the subjects practiced exercises for preventing uterine prolapse. This can be due to lesser compliance for exercises.<sup>15,17</sup>

Remaining 89% did not practice them. In my study it was found that 80% of the study population was not aware of exercises for prevention of uterine prolapse.

## Conclusion

The study featured awareness regarding Uterine prolapse and symptoms, investigations, treatment options, complications, and preventive measures related to it. Awareness about uterine prolapse as a medical condition was found to be as low as 57%. Majority of the women were unaware of symptoms of uterine prolapse. Very few women knew about prophylactic exercises (20%) and only 11% were practicing them. Uterine prolapse is a condition that affects physical, mental as well as social well being of the patients. Taking into consideration the findings of this study, it is imperative that immediate actions are taken to increase the awareness of uterine prolapse amongst the common masses.

### Clinical implication

From the above discussion it can be safely reported that percentage of women aware about uterine prolapse, is significantly low. Consequently, the knowledge about risk factors, symptoms, investigations and treatment interventions is not acquired by these patients.

Awareness about physiotherapy as a prophylactic intervention is very low and needs to be worked upon.

It should be understood that uterine prolapse adversely affects women's daily life and negatively influences their physical, mental and social well-being.

The results of this study would be helpful to demand an increase in the process of spreading awareness uterine prolapse, risk factors, symptoms, investigations, treatment and prevention uterine prolapse. The results can also be used as a basis for development of effective uterine prolapse awareness programs.

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