

UNDERSTANDING SOCIOLOGICAL ISSUES: CONCEPTUALIZING THE DIVERSITIES

EDITOR
DR. A.H.M. ZEHADUL KARIM

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Chapter 5

THE EXPERIENCE OF TREATING MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS AMONG URBAN MALAY WOMEN: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL CASE STUDY

Nurazzura Mohamad Diah

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the experiences of treating menopausal symptoms among the urban Malay working women in Kuala Lumpur. It attempts to demonstrate that Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) has become a preferred treatment by a number of women resulting in a level of medicalisation of the biological process. This is not to say that all, or even most, women use HRT, but rather that the increasing and relatively unquestioned use of HRT indicates a growing acceptance of this treatment as an appropriate response to biological change. This study employs ethnographic methods (participation observation and in-depth interviews) with a sample of thirty women aged 48-55. They are formally educated and work in professionally paid jobs. Data analysis was performed using the qualitative process. This study shows that treating menopausal symptoms by taking herbal remedies or complying with the humoral concept (hot-cold food) is no longer the practice of urban Malay women. Most women who take HRT expressed satisfaction with it as it reduced their menopause-related problems. They expressed strong belief in their doctor's ability to help them gain control of their bodies. They dismissed the belief that HRT may have a potential association with cancer and if they were aware of this, they were prepared to take the risk. They were of the opinion that menopause must be managed by experts just like their childbirth experiences were treated. The urban Malay women who took HRT have negotiated menopausal treatment in a different social environment compared to their mothers who were very silent about their condition. It is difficult to know if their mothers actually had