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Conceptualizing menopause and midlife: Chinese American and Chinese women in the US

Shelley R Adler ^a  ... Barbara Sternfeld ^g

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Abstract

Objectives: The purpose of this qualitative project was to describe and examine expectations and experiences of menopause and midlife in pre- and postmenopausal Chinese American and Chinese women in the United States. *Methods:* Four focus groups were formed from a total of 44 women: two groups of premenopausal Chinese/Chinese American women (one conducted in English and one in Cantonese) and two groups of postmenopausal Chinese/Chinese American women (one conducted in English and one in Cantonese). Qualitative data, in the form of transcripts, were interpreted using text-based content analysis. *Results:* The major thematic findings were: meanings of menopause are inextricably bound with meanings of midlife; the borders and timing of the menopausal transition are ambiguous; the menopausal transition represents a natural progression through the life cycle; the expectations of the

transition represents a natural progression through the life cycle, the expectations of the premenopausal women did not match the experiences of the postmenopausal women; menopause is viewed as a marker for aging; and the menopausal transition must be prepared for and managed. *Conclusions:* Study findings indicate that the participants did not share the strictly medicalized view of menopause as a discrete, biological entity. Menopause was typically described as a natural transition that was virtually interchangeable with midlife. While most of the participants characterized menopause as signaling the end of fertility and virtually synonymous with old age, some women described it as a new opportunity and a second chance at life. Participants felt a sense of their own agency in addressing what they viewed as a complex life stage, the experience of which could be manipulated.



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Keywords

Menopause; Midlife; Chinese American women; Chinese women

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