



A pilot study into the influence of the Finnish peat sauna on the climacteric symptoms of women

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Summary

In this pilot study it was found that a series of peat sauna sessions can result a significant decrease in undesired climacteric symptoms related to menopause, such as hot flushes, sweating, heart discomfort, sleep problems and irritability. Moreover, a general decrease of symptoms relating to performance, sexual problems and joint and muscular discomfort was observed. Therefore, the peat sauna is an effective variant of self-treating methods of menopausal symptoms.

Key index words: balneological peat, peat sauna, menopause, climacteric symptoms, self-treating methods for menopause

Introduction

The objective of this pilot study was to find out how menopausal symptoms are changing during and after a peat sauna, a Finnish variant of peat bath.

Materials and methods

A call was launched in local newspapers of town of Valkeakoski and Akaa in order to attract healthy women with menopausal symptoms without HRT or any other treatment for menopausal symptoms to take part in this study.

18 volunteer women with menopausal symptoms were selected. The age of the women varied between 43 and 64 years. It was concluded by using ultrasound scanning examinations of ovaries that eight of them were in menopause and ten of them in pre-menopause. One of them were excluded from the study because of the use of hormonal remedies and one of them could take part only in three sessions because of personal reasons. The women marked themselves the intensity of their symptoms in the scale between 0 and 4 in the Clinical Questionnaire for menopausal visits that featured 18 different climacteric symptoms. The symptoms were reported first the day before the starting of the series of six peat sauna sessions, the second time one day after the final session, and the third time one week after this session.

For the peat sauna sessions the women covered themselves from head to toe with the balneological peat at an average of 340 g/m² and stayed for 20 minutes in moderate warmth, with humidity at an average of 55%. After the ses-

sion they took a shower and rested for 20 minutes. The peat sauna sessions took place twice a week during the period of three weeks.

The peat was researched by the Geological Survey in Finland; the peat type was defined to be *Sphagnum-Carex* peat (moss sedge peat). The degree of humification was H8 (on von Post scale H1-H10), pH value 5.4 ash content 6.7 % and sulphur content 0.2 % by dry weight. Water content was 88 % by wet weight. The average content of humic acid was 28.5 %, fulvic acids 10%, pectins 0.3 %, hemicellulose 11.7 %, cellulose 8.6 % and humane (+lignin) 40.9 % by dry weight. Phyto estrogen content was found to be 12.9 ppm. The peat contains also a little of Mg, Mn, Mo, Si, Cu, Fe and Zn.

Results

There was a statistically significant (paired T-test) reduce in symptoms of hot flushes and sweating, heart discomfort, sleep problems, irritability and a general decrease in symptoms relating to performance, sexual problems and joint and muscular discomfort. ($p=0,041 - 0.0002$). More data and the findings will be reported separately elsewhere.

Conclusion

On the basis of this pilot research, it was found that the peat sauna is a promising variant of self-treating methods for menopausal symptoms. However, there is a need for further studies.