Abstract ID: 475
Theme: Advancing Women's Health – Qualitative

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Queen Margaret University EDINBURGH

LYDIA PLUS OSTEOPOROSIS PROJECT

Women's bone health in midlife - exploring impacts of a community peer-supported menopause intervention

Background

The perimenopausal period is characterised by the most rapid decline in muscle and bone health, and menopausal symptoms can hinder engagement in activities that support these. Life stressors may exacerbate menopausal experiences and contribute to further bone loss, while hormonal changes may heighten stress responses[1]. Women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face higher stress, experience more severe menopausal symptoms, and have an increased osteoporosis risk[2]. This project aimed to explore the impacts of a peer-supported, multidisciplinary community intervention for menopause, focusing on influences on adopting a bone-healthy lifestyle.

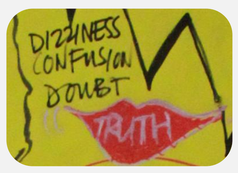
Methods

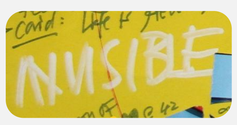
Methodology: Person-centred using creative participatory methods[3].
Setting: A charity offering a six-week menopause education programme including peer support, input from healthcare professionals across disciplines, covering different aspects of health and lifestyle.
Methods: "Drawing a Timeline" before the start of the programme and "Body Mapping" upon its completion. Data were analysed using thematic analysis.

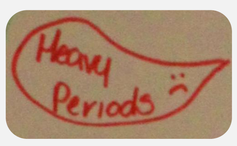
Results

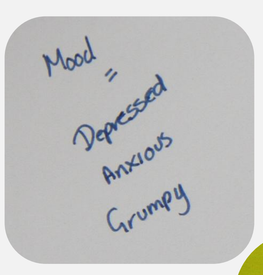
Participants: 6 women, age range 42-58. Median SIMD* decile 1. 4 employed, 2 unemployed.
Four themes are described and illustrated in Figure 1.

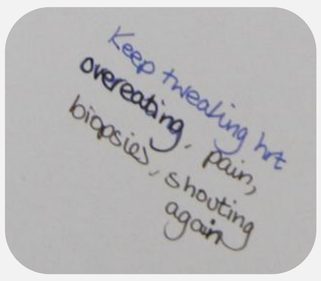
*Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. From simd.scot Accessed 27/08/26











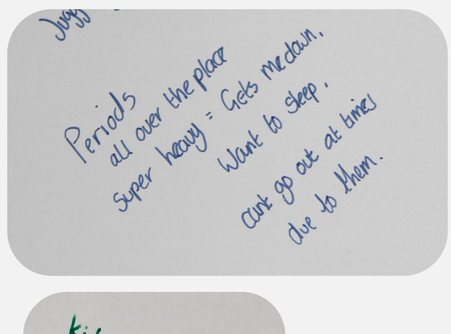


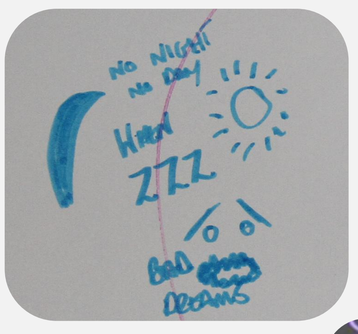


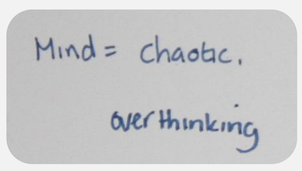


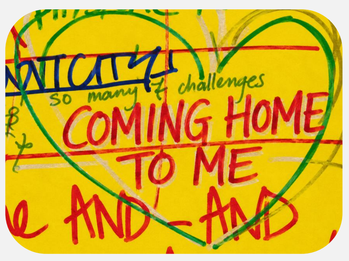
Perimenopause and Life Stress Challenges: Participants often find it challenging to focus on their wellbeing amid the life stresses and chaotic unravelling of perimenopause



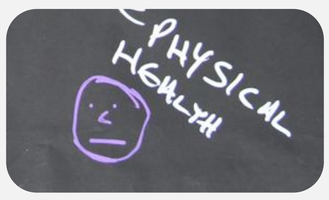


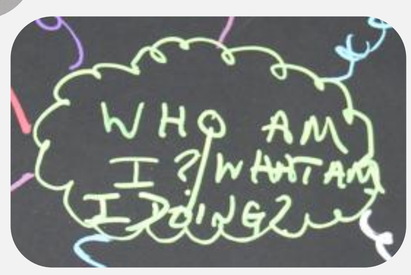






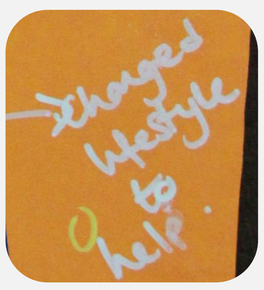


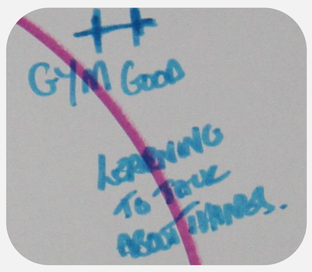


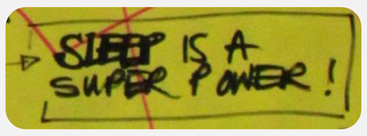




Personalised Management Plan: Participants want to feel better now rather than focusing on future health and require personalised support to address specific issues that hinder their ability to make supportive lifestyle changes









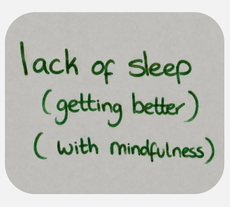
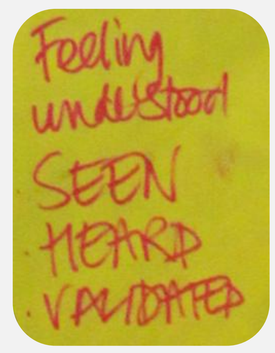


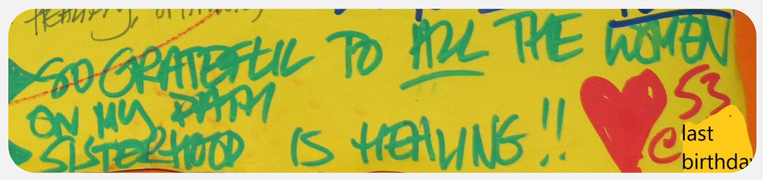


Figure 1: Four themes illustrated with excerpts of the artworks created by participants during the participatory activities. Artworks often corresponded to more than one theme; illustrations are not bounded and may be connected to one or more themes.



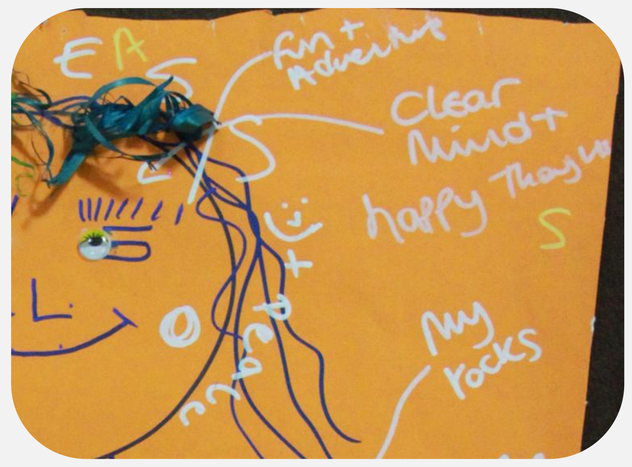
Finding Supportive Community: Participating in a group composed of individuals experiencing similar challenges offers reassurance that they are not "going mad" and that they are not alone in their journey





Autonomy and Transformation: Participants are looking for more than peer support; they want to experience the positive transformation that menopause may offer





Conclusions

- Participants in this study were not interested in their future bone health because they felt overwhelmed by unpleasant symptoms in the present.
- These data suggest that an intervention to increase bone-healthy lifestyle choices should focus on improving current symptoms and life stresses, and that peer support in groups may be beneficial.

Ethical Approval

The study has been reviewed by Queen Margaret University Nursing and Paramedic Science Divisional Ethics Committee and approved on 16/09/2024 (ref: NPSdivrec 2024/05). A favourable ethical opinion was given by South East Scotland Research Ethics Committee 02 on 19/12/2024 (ref: 24-SS-0089). NHS Lothian R&D management approval was granted on 31/07/2025 (ref: 2024/0214).

References

[1]Follis, S. L., et al. (2019). "Psychosocial stress and bone loss among postmenopausal women: results from the Women's Health Initiative." J Epidemiol Community Health **73**(9): 888-892.

[2]Brennan, S. L., et al. (2011). "Association between socioeconomic status and bone mineral density in adults: a systematic review." Osteoporosis international **22**: 517-527.

[3]Chowdhury, S., et al. (2021). "Supporting equitable partnerships in global health: A toolkit for participatory health research methods.". Retrieved 22/09/2026, from https://countdown.lstmed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/centre/Participatory%20Health%20Research%20Methods%20toolkit.pdf.