

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 11 December 2024
19th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

PE2012: Remove need for follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) blood tests before prescribing Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

Introduction

Petitioner Angela Hamilton

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to remove the need for follicle-stimulating hormone blood tests in women aged 40-45, who are experiencing menopause symptoms, before Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) can be prescribed to relieve their symptoms and replenish hormone levels.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2012>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 6 March 2024.](#) At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the British Menopause Society, and NHS Education for Scotland.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from NHS Education for Scotland, and the British Menopause Society, which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial position on this petition on 1 May 2023.](#)
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 110 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
December 2024

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2012: Remove need for follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) blood tests before prescribing Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

Petitioner

Angela Hamilton

Date Lodged

03 April 2023

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to remove the need for follicle-stimulating hormone blood tests in women aged 40-45, who are experiencing menopause symptoms, before Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) can be prescribed to relieve their symptoms and replenish hormone levels.

Previous action

I have discussed this issue with doctors, and with Jamie Hepburn MSP. I have also done research based on the menopause groups I am part of, and I'm now a voice for these women. I am now taking this issue to a national level.

Background information

As a 42 year-old perimenopausal woman, I joined online support groups, read about menopause and noticed a recurring theme. Many women aged 40-45 have been told they have all the symptoms of perimenopause, but as blood tests do not back this up, they are dismissed by doctors and left to suffer debilitating symptoms.

FSH tests are based on hormone levels at a precise moment, and do not give a clear indication of the fluctuating levels that occur during perimenopause. Why is this unreliable FSH test still being used, wasting valuable NHS funds?

The symptoms lead women to leave jobs and education, and miss out on precious time with family and friends. Their lives are taken over by what is a natural transition but one which is debilitating. Failed by doctors over and over again, some women take their lives because they cannot cope with the symptoms. GPs are not adequately trained to deal with menopause.

Change needs to happen to help more women lead a normal life.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2012 on 6 March 2024

The Convener: PE2012, on removing the need for follicle stimulating hormone blood tests before prescribing hormone replacement therapy, was lodged by Angela Hamilton. The petition calls on the Parliament to urge the Government to remove the need for FSH blood tests in women aged 40 to 45 who are experiencing menopause symptoms before HRT can be prescribed to relieve their symptoms and replenish hormone levels. It was last considered on 31 May last year, when we agreed to write to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and NHS Education for Scotland.

The Royal College for Obstetricians and Gynaecologists refers to expert advice from the British Menopause Society that, in accordance with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines, follicle stimulating hormone blood tests should be considered but not required to diagnose perimenopause and menopause in women aged 40 to 45. NHS Education for Scotland has confirmed that the online learning package on menopause and mental welfare is being researched and written, and it expects the resource to be available to general practitioners and primary care practitioners by the end of this month.

We have also received a submission from the petitioner, which shares the experience of a patient seeking menopause treatment and support who felt forced to seek private medical care and faced further difficulties with follow-up care when their treatment was passed to their GP.

A number of organisations have responded, advancing some of the issues that are raised in the petition. Do colleagues have any suggestions or comments for action?

David Torrance: Would the committee consider closing the petition under rule 15.7 of standing orders as NICE guidelines state that, for women aged 40 to 45, HRT can be offered without the need for blood tests when other menopausal symptoms are present? There is now a specialist menopause service in every mainland NHS health board with a buddy system in place for islands health boards. Also, NHS Education for Scotland has been commissioned to create an online learning package on menopause and menstrual health, with resources expected to be available for free to GPs and medical practitioners by the end of March 2024.

Maurice Golden: I respect what the member says but, particularly given the make-up of this committee, I wonder whether we should keep the petition open and write to the British Menopause Society seeking its views on the issues that are raised by the petition, including whether it has engaged with NHS Education for Scotland in the development of the online learning package that is being provided to GPs and medical practitioners in Scotland.

Foyso Choudhury: I think that we should write to the British Menopause Society seeking its advice.

The Convener: Mr Ewing, do you have a view?

Fergus Ewing: Well, I did wonder if there was much more we can do, for the reasons that Mr Torrance said, but if members want to write to the society, there is perhaps no harm in that.

The Convener: I think that Mr Golden was pointing out that we are a very masculine committee, which perhaps might mean that we are not giving due consideration, as others might, to some of the issues that are being raised here.

David Torrance: Convener, I will withdraw my recommendation.

The Convener: I understand the reasons that Mr Torrance gave but, at the same time, I think that Mr Golden makes a perfectly reasonable point. We will keep the petition open and write, as suggested, in relation to the issues in the petition. It occurred to me when I was updating colleagues that we can also just check with NHS Education for Scotland that the resource does materialise by the end of March. By the time we next consider the petition, we will know whether that package was properly introduced, which I think is a reasonable additional step.

Annexe C: Written submissions

NHS Education for Scotland written submission, 21 March 2024

PE2012/F: Remove need for follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) blood tests before prescribing Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

Having been commissioned to develop an online learning package around Menopause and Menstrual Health NES are progressing development of the materials. The learning package will comprise four modules:

1. menstrual health
2. peri-menopause
3. menopause
4. post-menopause

There has been a slight delay to delivery, but the modules will be released sequentially with module one expected to be published early in the new financial year. The perimenopause content has been designed by NES primary care educators and includes current national guidance on FSH testing and interpretation in women between 40 and 45 years. The resource will be available to general practice/primary care practitioners on the NHS Education for Scotland Turas Learn platform and will be widely publicised to the target audience via our communications strategy. It will be free to access for practitioners working in Scotland and incorporates cases describing the lived experience of women facing barriers to accessing HRT preparations. The resources have been sent for review by national experts in women's health to check for accuracy of content and ensure that clinical guidance reflects best practice. All NHS Education for Scotland resources undergo a regular review period to ensure any changes to guidance and current best practice are reflected.

British Menopause Society written submission, 22 October 2024¹

PE2012/G: Remove need for follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) blood tests before prescribing Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

As per NICE guideline, blood tests are not needed to diagnose perimenopause or menopause in women aged over 45 and are not often necessary in women aged 40 to 45. Diagnosis, and hence need or not for treatment, should be based on history, period pattern and presence or not of symptoms.

¹ Response originally submitted in March 2024 but only received by the Committee in October 2024.