

[https://www.postandcourier.com/health/charleston-area-physicians-dispel-menopause-myths-as-more-women-express-concerns/article\\_1997c1bc-514a-11ed-91a7-375a852eae25.html](https://www.postandcourier.com/health/charleston-area-physicians-dispel-menopause-myths-as-more-women-express-concerns/article_1997c1bc-514a-11ed-91a7-375a852eae25.html)

# Charleston area physicians dispel menopause myths as more women express concerns

BY ZHARIA JEFFRIES ZJEFFRIES@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

OCT 22, 2022



Kerri Devine (left), founder of *Hot in Charleston*, best-selling author, Lee Woodruff (middle) and Charleston-based writer and editor Cinelle Barnes (right) discuss the varied misconceptions of menopause as part of a panel discussion for World Menopause Day Charleston. Devine and Barnes spearheaded the initiative and were joined by Dr. Elaine Eustis, Dr. Anita Ramsetty and Dr. Connie Guille. Marni Rothschild Durlach/Provided

Nearly a decade ago, 56-year-old Kerri Devine, founder of virtual women's forum [Hot in Charleston](#) for women ages 35 and up, started experiencing overwhelming anxiety, joint pain and insomnia.

She was in perimenopause, the transitional period when a woman's ovaries gradually stop working and which is marked by a range of physical and emotional symptoms like anxiety, depression, night sweats and decreasing hormone levels.

At the time she was 47 and had never heard of the term that marks the years leading up to menopause, which usually occurs one year after a woman's last period.

For many women the years before going into full menopause are accompanied by some of the most uncomfortable, painful and emotionally frustrating symptoms.

---

Devine said she felt unprepared, like most women in the early stages of menopause. And after hearing similar experiences from women in her circle, she started Hot in Charleston as a way to connect with thousands of other women in the Lowcountry seeking answers.

"The best advice I received was from talking to other women," Devine told The Post and Courier. "I founded Hot in Charleston on Mother's Day in May 2022, admonishing our mothers for not talking about this."

Now with over 1,500 women across the Lowcountry and the U.S. part of her growing community, Devine set out to transform her virtual forum in person, hosting HIC's first World Menopause Day event on Oct. 18 at the Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston.

Leading up to the event, Devine conducted a survey of 100 Charleston women between the ages of 35 and 70.

---



#### PALMETTO POLITICS

SC Senate refuses to advance abortion ban but keeps further restrictions a possibility

BY SEANNA ADCOX SADCX@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

"Most women were unprepared for menopause, no matter their age," Devine said. "And 73 percent said it would be helpful to read a personal narrative of someone going through it."

The event hosted over 100 women and a panel of writers, including Devine and fellow authors Lee Woodruff and Cinelle Barnes, medical experts from the Medical University of South Carolina, Dr. Anita Ramsetty and Dr. Connie Guille, and founder of [Menopause Solutions](#), Dr. Elaine Eustis.

The panel addressed numerous misconceptions related to menopause and gave general tips and validation toward the array of emotional and physical symptoms, leaving room for the audience to tell their own stories at the end and get feedback from the professionals.

---

Women between the ages of 35 and 70 filled the room nearest the courtyard of the Gibbes Museum, laughing and networking with others at their tables, listening and nodding their heads in agreement with the panel guests periodically.

At times the room was silent, all 130 women listening intensely as Eustis and Ramsetty discussed treatment options.

"Women let their guard down," Devine said. "They were truly listening."

Common misconceptions the panel discussed included the myth that all forms of hormone replacement therapy, medication to replace the estrogen the female body stops making during menopause, cause breast cancer. Other myths included substantial weight gain due to menopause and social myths related to a low quality of life once a women's ovaries stop functioning.

---

Woodruff, who underwent menopause at the same time she was becoming an empty nester, said the opposite is true, encouraging women to embrace the change their bodies are undergoing as a new life journey.

**NEWS****Survivors tout breast cancer screenings many missed during the pandemic****BY TOM CORWIN TCORWIN@POSTANDCOURIER.COM**

"For generations this was a topic that women avoided, but now it's out of the shadows and Charleston is now part of a national movement to focus attention on women in midlife," Devine said.

## Help along the way

The average menopause symptoms can last between three and 10 years, with many of the women on the panel and in the audience expressing how they watched their mothers go through menopause, unbeknownst to them.

Just as they are often confused and unaware of what their symptoms mean, many were unable to realize what their mothers were going through, especially if they did not exhibit textbook symptoms like hot flashes and night sweats.

---

But symptoms can range from severe anxiety and depression, vaginal dryness and urinary incontinence, sleep issues, body chills, mood changes and weight gain.

Many of the women also expressed frustration trying to find health care providers who specialize in menopause and symptom remediation.

Eustis said the problem with finding specific menopause providers starts in the medical education system.

"Internal medicine, family practice and OBGYN residents should all be really comfortable taking care of menopausal women," Eustis told The Post and Courier.

Eustis said most medical residents in the U.S. don't get an extensive menopause education in medical school. "They really just touch on it," she said.

**NEWS**

A tale of 2 pandemics: Anti-tobacco giant talks COVID-19 similarities at MUSC

BY ZHARIA JEFFRIES ZJEFFRIES@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

And a recent study published by [Mayo Clinic](#) surveyed residents across 20 different residency programs.

---

Over 90 percent of residents said that it was very important to be trained in menopause. But less than 10 percent reported feeling adequately prepared to work with a woman experiencing menopause by the time they finished their residency.

In a statement to The Post and Courier, the School of Medicine in Columbia said there is "certainly increasing interest" among students on menopause.

Students there learn about menopause in the preclinical curriculum during their second year and are able to attend a learning session and diagnosis and treatment sessions based on menopause in their third and fourth years, the statement said.

The Medical University of South Carolina did not respond to comment in time for this report to publish.

For more information on Devine's organization, visit [www.hotincharleston.com](http://www.hotincharleston.com).

Follow Zharia Jeffries on Twitter @Zharia\_Jeffries.

MORE INFORMATION

A Charleston mom had a baby after breast cancer. She wants more women to know they can too.

MUSC dental college unveils new portraits for patients with disabilities

---

## ZHARIA JEFFRIES