

Patient profile: Charu



- Charu is a **32 year old mother** of twins who are now 3 years old
- She has not felt well since having the girls
- She has complained of **tiredness** and a **tendency to faint**
- Her full blood count showed **Hb 68 g/l** with an iron deficient picture
- She **bleeds every three weeks**. She thought this was normal after having babies and was worse as she had two

Diagnosis: the 3 key questions

- 1. How much do you bleed?**
The bleeding lasts for 9 days and I have to sleep on a towel to protect the bed at night
- 2. Does your blood loss affect you physically?**
I generally feel tired and I get out of breath when running after my daughters
- 3. Does your monthly bleeding affect your daily life?**
Yes, very much. I avoid leaving the house during my period

Further investigations

Charu has heavy bleeding and **no significant risk indicators** for pathology. **Examination** was unremarkable. An **ultrasound** has been done and no structural cause has been shown.

Discussion

1. HMB is a very common symptom, even in young women. Regardless of age, always take time to assess your patients' bleeding pattern.
2. Whenever there is associated **anaemia**, iron tablets should be prescribed. Dietary advice should be given in order to increase intake of iron-rich foods.
3. In the absence of organic pathology, consider **long-term hormonal treatments**. Assess the contraceptive needs of the patient as well as contraindications to oestrogen use. **Explain all the available options**, so the patient can choose the regimen that better fits her needs.

Patient profile: **Julie**



- Julie is a **46 year old** primary school teacher
- Periods are still regular but now **last for 8 or 9 days** and then it is barely two weeks before the next
- She is **moody and irritable** for the second of those weeks, has night sweats and wakes repeatedly
- She is tired and struggles with both work and her marriage

Diagnosis: the 3 key questions

- 1. How much do you bleed?**
During the first three days of my period I wake up during the night to change protection
- 2. Does your blood loss affect you physically?**
I pass large blood clots, especially at night
- 3. Does your monthly bleeding affect your daily life?**
Absolutely, I avoid meeting friends around my period and mostly stay at home. I definitely don't like to travel

Further investigations

Julie has no other bleeding and her **family history** has nothing to show. Her general health is good, she is **not overweight, exercises** and has never had **high blood pressure or smoked**. Examination was unremarkable. The **ultrasound** performed did not reveal any structural cause.

Discussion

- 1.** In **peri-menopausal women**, it is important to evaluate the impact of vasomotor symptoms on the quality of life, as hormonal replacement therapy might be indicated. Check if the patient has any opposition to hormonal treatments.
- 2.** Since there is risk of unintended pregnancy in this age group, always assess the patient's **contraceptive needs**.
- 3.** Check for any **contraindication to oestrogens** and inform the patient about the **different regimens** so she can choose the one that fits her best.

Patient profile: **Frances**



- Frances is **36 years old** and of **Afro Caribbean ethnicity**
- She feels uncomfortable in her **lower abdomen**. She is having to get up three times at night to **pass urine** and goes every hour in the day but passes only small volumes
- She has always been slim but lately has been feeling **bloated**
- Her periods have always been on the **heavy side** but have become worse. She needs to use maximum absorbency products to get through a class at the university where she teaches

Diagnosis: the 3 key questions

1. How much do you bleed?

I struggle to keep tampons in and use a night time pad during the day and have to change after about an hour and a half. I manage a bit longer at night but get up 2-3 times

2. Does your blood loss affect you physically?

I am sure that the bleeding makes me feel tired but I keep getting this dragging feeling with it as though something is pressing down

3. How does it affect your life?

I work in the university and although the students are all adults I worry about getting to the end of a session. I would normally play hockey but don't go in the first 3 or 4 days of my period as it is just too awful

Further investigations

Frances has no bleeding between periods. **Examination** has shown her womb to be enlarged. The **ultrasound** confirmed the diagnosis of fibroids. **The biggest is about 8cm across.**

Discussion

1. Whenever you find an organic cause for HMB, always inform the patient clearly about the clinical situation and the **available treatment options**, so she can decide on the best option for her.
2. Refer the patient to a center that provides adequate standards of care.
3. Consider the need for **interim therapy** for symptomatic treatment, such as NSAIDs and tranexamic acid, and for iron supplementation.