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Changes in sex hormone during the menopausal transition are thought to have an important impact on weight gain. Obesity is known to be a determinant of health and disease; especially cardiovascular diseases. We studied the waist circumference, body mass index and its correlation with the blood pressure of a sample of menopausal women in Zaria. The height (m), weight (kg), waist circumference (cm) and blood pressure (mmHg) of the women was assessed using standard methods, while the body mass index (BMI) in kg/m² was calculated. 165 subjects participated in the study, 77 were premenopausal women while 88 were postmenopausal women with mean ages 25.51±0.60yrs and 53.59±0.65yrs respectively. The subjects were selected based on some exclusion criteria. Postmenopausal women were more likely to be overweight (mean BMI 25.96±0.53kg/m²) compared with their premenopausal counterparts (23.13±0.57kg/m²); p<0.001. The menopausal women also had a higher waist circumference (93.04±1.60cm) as compared with the premenopausal women (78.87±1.30cm); p<0.001. Only 73.86% of the postmenopausal women had a BMI ≥ 25 kg/m² whereas the prevalence of central obesity was 79%. However, there was a significant positive correlation observed between waist circumference and the body mass index (p<0.05). These findings suggest that obesity is prevalent among the menopausal women while the waist circumference was found to be a better measure in assessing obesity and thus cardiovascular risk among menopausal women in Zaria. We recommend the establishment of menopause clinics for early identification of women at risk and hence commencement of intervention.

Key words: Body Mass Index, Blood pressure, Menopause, Obesity, Waist circumference

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