
SPRING 2022

Women's Midlife Adventure

Quarterly E-Newsletter

Welcome back for the fourth issue of the [Women's Midlife Adventure Newsletter!](#)

March was **Women's History Month**-- a great time to celebrate women and bring to light issues women face that don't receive the attention they deserve. One of those issues is the increased risk for developing Alzheimer's Disease that, for some women, accompanies midlife hormone-related changes in the brain. Dr. Watts was featured in the Women's History Month social media feed for the University of Kansas Alzheimer's Disease Research Center.



Bicycle with Spring Flowers in Basket - Jill Wellington - Pixabay

Our goal is to address the lack of research on women's experiences in midlife in the fields of social science and medicine. We'll keep you updated on [research](#), [upcoming events](#), and [resources](#) related to our work on women's experiences in midlife. If you'd like to be added to or unsubscribe from our contact list, email your request to branchlab@ku.edu

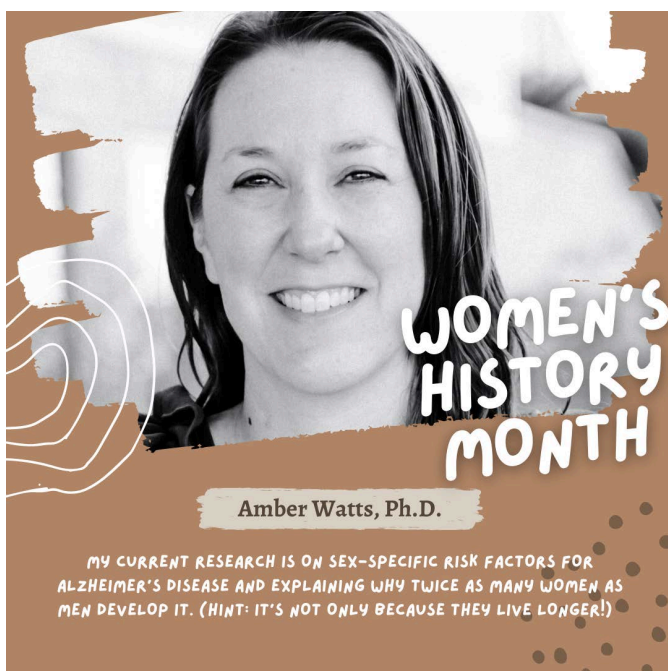
Ways to Keep in Touch

Find our Women's Midlife Adventure Network Facebook Page at

<https://www.facebook.com/AmberWattsPhD>

Follow Women's Midlife Adventure on Instagram

[@amberwatts_phd](https://www.instagram.com/amberwatts_phd)



Who We Are

BRANCH Lab-Behavioral Research in Aging, Neuroscience, Cognition, & Health

Amber Watts PhD, Director of the BRANCH Lab, University of Kansas <http://aginglab.ku.edu>

Students: Genna Losinski, Hilary Hicks, Ilana Engel, Pilar Thangwaritorn, Zara Hassan, Juliamaria Coromac

Clinical Experiences



Photo of Ilana Engel, MA. and a stethoscope on a heart



Gender Matters in Medicine

Ilana Engel, M.A., is training to become a clinical psychologist in a medical center setting. As part of her training, she observes medical appointments to understand patient perspectives. Recently, she noticed a discrepancy between what a female patient reported to a male versus a female health care provider about her experience of urinary incontinence. Initially, the patient denied having urinary problems when assessed by the male physician. When he left the room, the patient confided she did indeed have these problems, but she didn't feel comfortable sharing it in front of the male physician. This turned out to be important information for the decision that the providers eventually made to refer the patient for further treatment with a specialist. This experience led Ilana to reflect on how we, as women, report our symptoms. She asks us to consider:

- Have you ever been uncomfortable sharing with a health care provider?
- What caused you to feel discomfort?
- What could the medical team do to make you feel more comfortable?
- What might you do, as a patient, to make sure your needs are met?

Social Media

Zara Hassan is an undergraduate student preparing for a career in medicine. She recently joined our research group and has interests in women's health and neuro-degenerative diseases like Alzheimer's. She maintains our social media pages on Facebook and Instagram and finds the latest research to keep us up to date. She has a keen eye for images and topics that get our attention and teach us new information.



Photo of Zara Hassan at University of Kansas

Works in Progress

- Our paper on Midlife Women's Sexual Experiences is currently under review for publication
- Our research lab submitted 3 grant applications for funding to support a new research project on women's midlife risk factors for Alzheimer's disease
- We submitted 6 papers to the annual meeting of the Gerontological Society of America, which will meet in November in Indianapolis, IN (see an example in Quickie Results). Topics included:
 - Gender differences in the benefits of physical activity
 - How we learn about menopause
 - Activity patterns in "early birds" vs. "night owls"

Quickie Results

How do we learn about Menopause? Not from Mom!

- ❖ Middle-aged women feel under-educated about what to expect during menopause.
- ❖ We interviewed 27 women (ages 39-57) of diverse races and sexual identities about experiences and expectations of menopause.
- ❖ Most did not directly discuss their mothers' experiences of menopause with their mothers.
- ❖ Some observed their mothers' experiences indirectly, while others were unaware of it entirely.
- ❖ A surprisingly high number of women from previous generations had hysterectomies and could not provide information about natural menopause.
- ❖ Women discussed generational differences in menopause attitudes (like more openness to discussing it now) and new ways of seeking information (thanks to the Internet).
- ❖ Women reported overwhelmingly negative experiences seeking menopause-related health care including feeling dismissed or experiencing ageist and sexist attitudes.
- ❖ We concluded that we need to better educate women and their healthcare providers about menopause and menopause care.
- ❖ In the future, we'd like to develop intergenerational interventions to bring together post-menopausal women with pre-menopausal women to share their experiences.



Women Talking - Fernandozhiminaicela - Pixabay

What We're Reading, Watching, & Listening To



Books and Headphones - Pixabay

- ❖ *Podcast/Blog: Feisty Menopause* www.feistymenopause.com
 - with featured podcast *Hit Play, Not Pause*
- ❖ *Blog: Savvy Love* - Karin Jones
 - <https://www.savvy-love.com/>
 - featuring the story *Menopause for Men*
- ❖ *Blog: Short Guides for Healthy Aging* - Jane Tilley
 - <https://janetillywrites.wordpress.com/publications>

