

**“It just makes me feel a little less alone”:
A qualitative exploration into the impact
and mechanisms of the podcast
‘menopause: unmuted’ to communicate
menopause-related health information**

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Background

- Menopause is a “milestone event of remarkable changes” (p. 33)¹ in a woman’s life, defined by one year after the **final menstrual period**, which reflects a loss of ovarian follicular function
 - Among other symptoms, women frequently report **vasomotor symptoms** (80%), **problems with memory** (60%), and **depressive symptoms** consistent with potential clinical depression (23%).²
- The internet is increasingly used as a source of health information and searches for health information are the third most popular online activity.³ However, only a **minority** of menopause websites had appropriate readability levels for the population.⁴
 - Audiovisual health information may increase knowledge⁵ more than written content⁶, suggesting that **audiovisual resources** may be an accessible means of communicating health information.
- In 2020, 75% of people living in the US were aware of **podcasts**, and 38% had listened in the last month.⁷ Podcasts provide opportunities for communicating health information and have been found to be an **accessible method for increasing knowledge and changing health behaviours**⁸⁻¹⁰ as well as **challenging perceptions of stigmatized topics**.¹¹



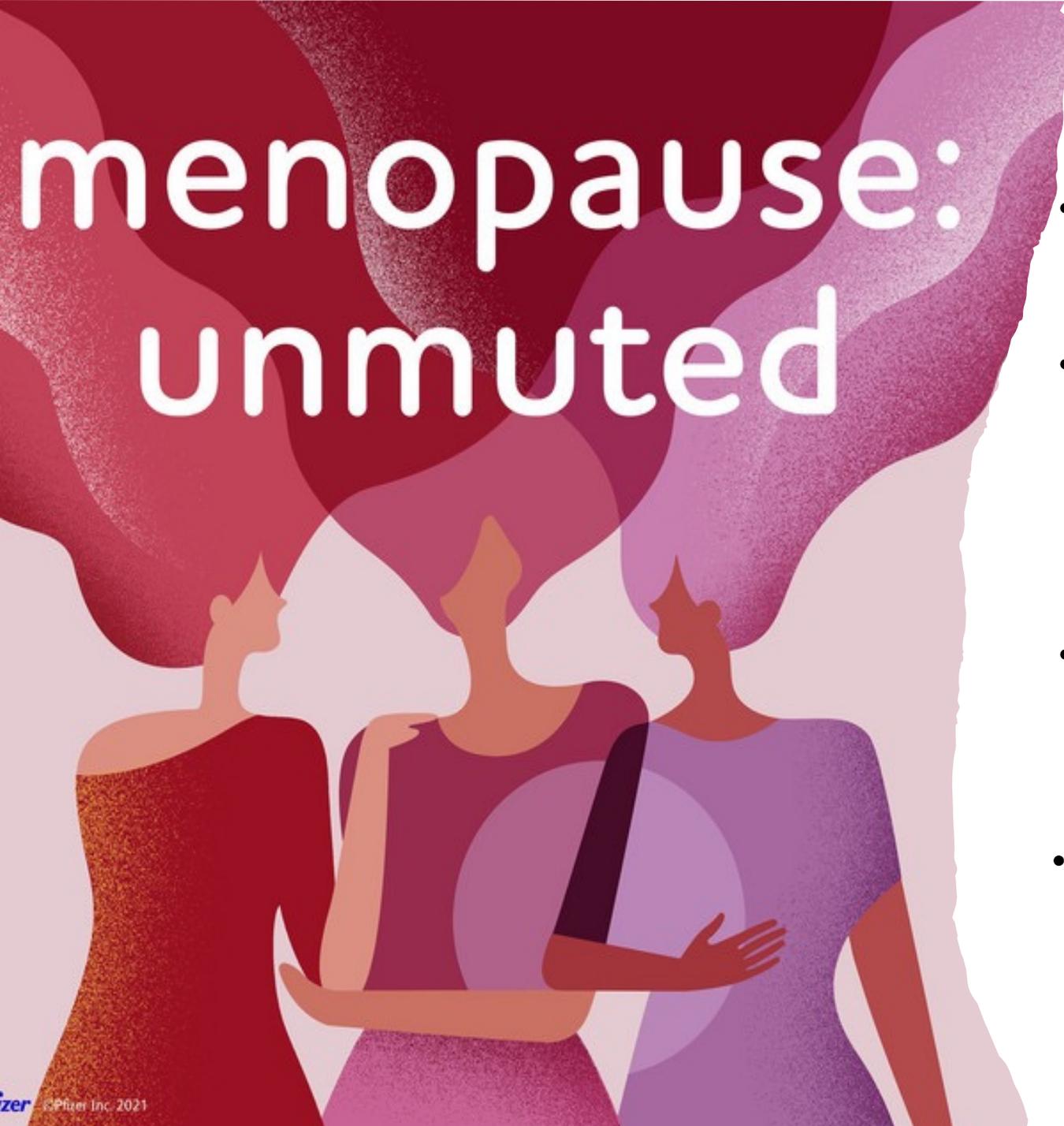
A large-scale survey (n = 1027) conducted by HealthyWomen showed that:¹²

- Information in podcasts was rated as **more understandable and more actionable**, in comparison to other forms of health information (online videos, print, social media, television, and websites).
- Participants who listened to podcasts had **higher levels of health activation** than non-listeners and were motivated to seek out various forms of health information
- There was an appetite for additional podcasts covering various health topics:
 - Half of women who listened to podcasts wanted **more information on women's health**
 - A third of women wanted more information on **menopause** specifically

*Agreement with statement:

"Taking an active role in my own healthcare is the most important thing that affects my health"

menopause: unmuted

An illustration of three women in conversation. The woman on the left is wearing a dark red dress. The woman in the middle is wearing a purple top with a white circle. The woman on the right is wearing a purple top. They are standing in front of a background of large, overlapping, abstract shapes in shades of red and purple. The text 'menopause: unmuted' is overlaid on the top left of the image.

Podcast

- Menopause:unmuted is a podcast series from Pfizer Women's Health Team (100k downloads as of Oct 2022).
- Provides first-hand accounts of menopause from real women, with commentary from a women's health professional giving a medical perspective, addressing menopause myths, and offering evidence-based lifestyle information.
- The series was developed using the evidence-base for storytelling as an educational tool, using empathy and first-person perspective to 'activate' listeners.
- Based on Fisher's Narrative Theory, which proposes that stories are more engaging and add credibility and authenticity to health messages.^{13,14}

Aims & Methods

Aim: To understand the impact of 'menopause: unmuted' on women's menopause-related knowledge, understanding, and communication practices, as well as understand the mechanisms of how women connected with the real-life stories on the podcast.

Methods:

- The study recruited 30 US women, responding to an online advert
- Women were screened via telephone to establish demographics, stage of menopause, contact with HCPs and health literacy
- Maximum variation sampling was used to increase diversity (age, education, and ethnicity) of sample
- Selected participants had one week to listen to five episodes before a semi-structured interview with a member of the research team
- Participants who completed the research were offered a \$50 gift certificate
- Data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis through a six step process¹⁵: (1) familiarization, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) theme definition and naming, and (6) writing this into a coherent narrative.

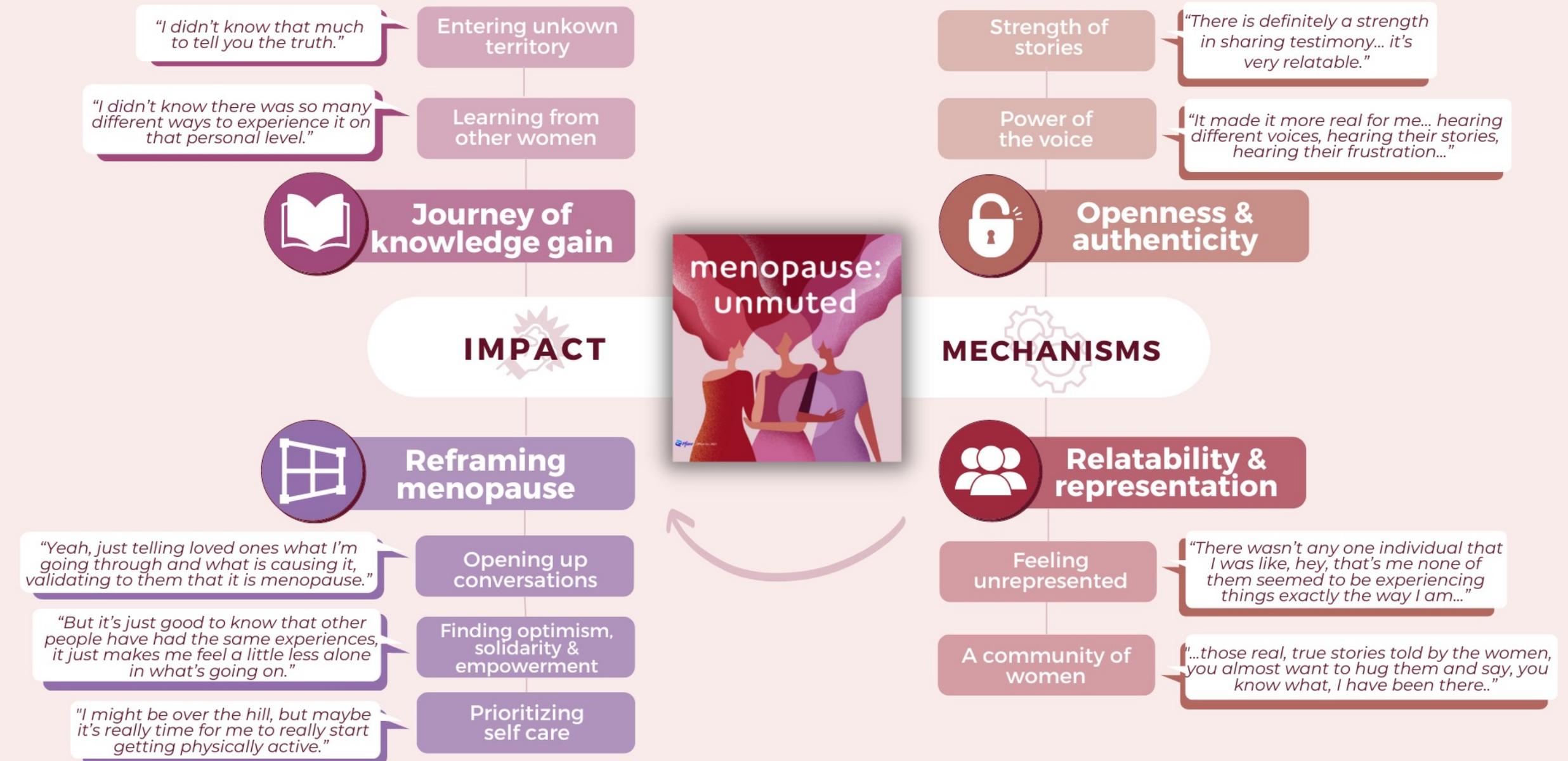
Eligibility

- Female
- Aged 40-60 years
- English speaking
- Willing to listen to five 'Menopause: Unmuted' podcast episodes (approx. 20 mins each)
- No severe hearing or visual impairment

Sample Demographics

	Category	Number (percentage)
Age Mean = 48.80 years Standard Deviation = 7.42 years	40-45 years	12 (40.0)
	46-50 years	6 (20.0)
	51-55 years	4 (13.3)
	56-60 years	8 (26.7)
Race / Ethnicity	Caucasian / White	16 (53.3)
	Black / African American	6 (20.0)
	Hispanic / Latina	4 (13.3)
	Asian	1 (3.3)
	Other	3 (10.0)
Education	Grade 12 / GED	3 (10.0)
	College 1 - 3 years	5 (16.7)
	College 4 years +	22 (73.3)

Key Findings



Conclusions & Implications

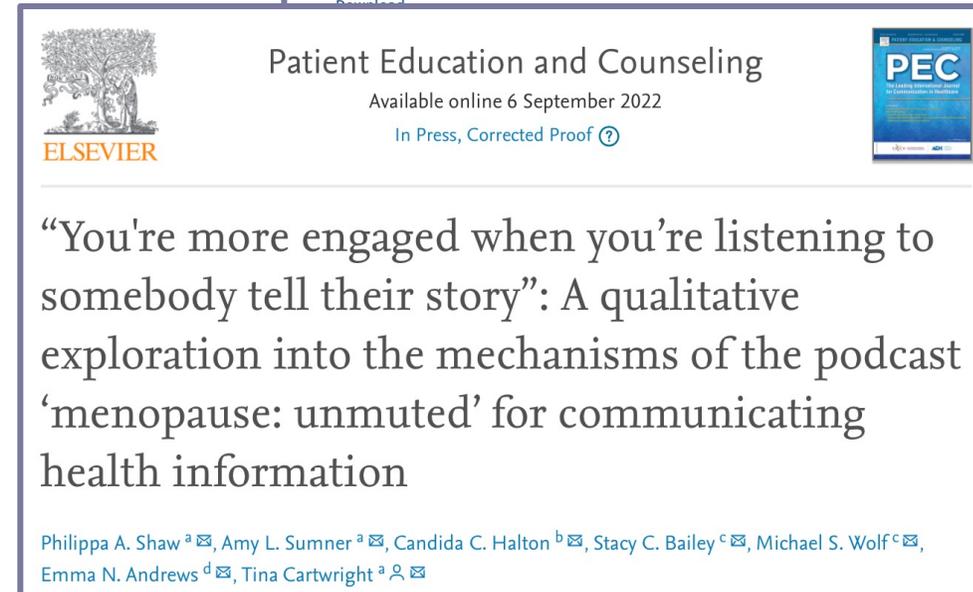
- To our knowledge, this is the **first study** to explore the impact and mechanisms of listening to a podcast about menopause as a way of communicating health information in an accessible way.
- Listening to a menopause-related podcast, specifically one that shares diverse stories from the experiences of real women, has the potential to **increase women's knowledge and understanding of menopause symptoms and experiences**.
 - Women described feeling **empowered to make changes in their lives** and initiating **menopause-related conversations** with friends, family, and healthcare professionals.
- The sharing of **authentic and relatable experiences** in a story-telling format, voiced by the women themselves, enabled participants to feel part of the conversation and make an intimate connection with the women featured in the series, **facilitating a community of women**.
 - Future health education podcasts should include **diverse stories**, representing a range of demographics and experiences, to increase listener's relatability and connection.
- Overall, the research demonstrated that sharing stories via an audio medium (podcasts) was an accessible, acceptable, and impactful method of communicating health information about menopause to a diverse sample of women.

Acknowledgements

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Read more about the impact and mechanisms of engagement of the menopause:unmuted podcast....



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