

Dr Clare Boothroyd presents the session - PCOS and managing your emotions

Voice 1:

Hello everyone. You're watching a video stream about PCOS and managing your emotions.

This video stream has been developed in partnership with Women's Health, QUT, and POSAA.

The guest presenter here with me today is Dr Clare Boothroyd who is a registered endocrinologist and gynaecologist, and Queensland's leading fertility specialist.

Dr Boothroyd is actively involved in research in many areas related to women's health and fertility, in particular unexplained infertility and PCOS.

Dr Boothroyd's practice, Assisted Conception Australia, is located in the Greenslopes Specialist Centre at Greenslopes.

Welcome Dr. Boothroyd. So to begin our discussion can you please explain, how can I keep my mood swings under control and manage anxiety that comes with PCOS?

Dr Clare Boothroyd:

I'm not convinced that mood swings are an integral part of polycystic ovarian syndrome. In fact my clinical impression over the years is that, as a group, women with polycystic ovarian syndrome are actually psychologically very well balanced. I think this is a very common condition - 9% of women have polycystic ovarian syndrome, and mood swings and anxiety are also very common, so it's very likely that they will co-exist.

I think that mood swings are really part of an individual underlying personality trait in the setting of the stresses under which we put ourselves in modern life. I think as women in 2011 we really ask too much of ourselves. For instance, we want to have a fantastic career, we often have very demanding jobs, we're studying as well, we've got to balance human relationships with our family, with our partner and if we've got children, or we want to have children. Then we've got to run the house, and then somehow we've got to diet and exercise. I mean it's very, very hard to get your head around all that, and to find time. And mood swings are a manifestation of the frustration of modern life and I think they're universal whether you have polycystic ovarian syndrome or not.

The thing about polycystic ovarian syndrome is that the manifestations are always worse when a woman gains weight. Now, weight gain in our society is a big problem. You don't have to look around to realize that you're not the fattest or the leanest woman in the world.

The thing is that if a woman gains weight the manifestations will be worse. And one thing we know about depression is that it makes it much harder for women to lose weight and it makes it much easier for them to gain weight. Rosemary Stanton had a wonderful quotable quote, and she said that “my obese patients will often say to me, if only I could lose weight, I would feel better about myself”. And Rosemary Stanton said, “but, in fact it’s the converse, if you felt better about yourself, you would be able to lose weight”. And the thing about depression is that it’s very hard to diet and to restrict yourself and that’s where things like comfort eating come in.

I think that mood is very important in what happens to women who have polycystic ovarian syndrome and it may be that if they have a tendency for depression, or a tendency to anxiety or whatever that makes them tend to eat more and to exercise less and that’s going to have a lot of implications for the disease.

Really, I’m not convinced that they are causally related or perhaps even associated – they are very common conditions.

It’s really important that people who are involved in caring for women with PCOS do address mood and depression and there are actually guidelines for recommending screening for anxiety and depression for women with polycystic ovarian syndrome. Because if that’s present it’s going to have an implication on the management.