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## OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY BOARD REVIEW MANUAL

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## Management of Women at Menopause; Breast Cancer

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## Table of Contents

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### Chapter 1—Management of Women at Menopause: A Case Study . . . . . 2

**Contributing Author: Michelle Battistini, MD**

### Chapter 2—Breast Cancer: Case Studies . . . . . 17

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## OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY BOARD REVIEW MANUAL

### Chapter 1—Management of Women at Menopause: A Case Study

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#### I. INTRODUCTION

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It is critical to develop an understanding of the issues involved in caring for women experiencing menopause. The postmenopausal population is rapidly expanding with the aging of the “baby-boomers” and is expected to reach 63 million women by the year 2005 (up from 40 million in 1996).<sup>1</sup> In addition, life expectancy for women at the dawn of the new millennium is 82 years compared with 47 years at the beginning of this century.<sup>1</sup> The average age of menopause is 51.3 years; thus, more women are reaching menopause and living longer after menopause than ever before.<sup>2</sup> The goal of caring for the menopausal woman is to promote those activities that increase longevity and improve quality of life. In addition to a discussion regarding the consequences of the endocrine changes associated with the menopause, office encounters with perimenopausal and postmenopausal women provide an opportunity to promote the concept of healthy aging, discuss the issues affecting quality and quantity of life, and create an approach to health care focused on health maintenance and disease prevention based on the appropriate application of primary as well as secondary preventive strategies.<sup>2,3</sup>

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#### II. CASE PATIENT 1 PRESENTATION

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Patient 1 is a 52-year-old Caucasian woman who presents for an examination and the need to discuss “the menopause.” It has been 3 to 4 years since her last gynecologic examination. She sees a neighborhood doctor for colds and influenza but otherwise does not obtain routine care. She made the appointment because of concern about her menstrual periods and the fact that they still occur. Patient 1 reports fairly regular periods with an occasional missed menses until 1 year ago. Since that time, her periods have been unpredictable. She reports that her last menstrual period occurred 4 months ago, with the preceding menses occurring 3 months before. She has no heavy or prolonged bleeding or intermenstrual bleeding. Because patient 1 is older than 50 years, she expected her menstrual periods to have stopped by now. She asks whether this means that something is wrong. She read on the Internet that a blood test can indicate whether one is menopausal. She would like to have this test.

#### DISCUSSION

- **What is the definition of menopause?**

*Menopause* is a permanent cessation of menses occurring secondary to a loss of ovarian activity; it is defined