For Immediate Release

NEW SURVEY: MENOPAUSE GUIDELINES IGNORED
Menopausal women being denied life changing treatment which could reduce mortality by 50%

London - XX December 2016 – New research unveiled today shows that crucial guidelines1 by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) for the treatment of the menopause are being widely ignored by GPs, CCGs and the NHS; leaving peri- and post-menopausal women at increased risk of fractured bones, cancer and heart attacks. The Libera Centre in London, part of Harley Street-based cooperative Nuada Medical (www.nuadamedical.com) aims to address this issue by giving women almost instant access to the best diagnoses and treatments available, including therapies shown to cut mortality by half.

Brand new research conducted by independent survey OnePoll and commissioned by Nuada Medical on 350 women in the UK going through the menopause, uncovered that over half (51%) were either prescribed nothing or inappropriately treated with antidepressants.

Menopause services in the UK continue to fall behind official guidelines. A recent ‘menopause map’ shows that there is only one specialist clinic for every 355,000 eligible women in the UK². Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) and testosterone are being withheld from women due to the lack of awareness of GPs as to their benefits, who still commonly prescribe antidepressants in their stead – in fact, flying in the face of NICE recommendations which discourage their use. Moreover, a recent landmark study proving that bone fracture rate was 76% higher among those women prescribed antidepressants such as Prozac, one year after starting treatment³. Whilst the survey discovered HRT is the commonest prescription, it is only being prescribed to two out of five women (42%).

Additionally, testosterone, which again is supported by NICE to relieve the symptoms of menopause, continues to be difficult to access. Pharmaceutical company MSD announced in 2012 that although it was the only supplier in the UK, it was discontinuing the production of testosterone implants due to a global ‘profitability’ decision⁴. Despite a new supplier last year stepping in to fill the void, GPs are still not prescribing the hormone as needed. The new study by OnePoll reveals only 12% of women were offered testosterone.

Anne Henderson, consultant gynaecologist at Nuada Medical and joint lead of the new Libera Centre is a leading specialist in hormone-related disorders including menopause, pre-menstrual syndrome (PMT) and post-natal depression. She has carried out substantial research project into these areas, and her work has been widely published in major peer review journals. Anne said;

“Most women think that cancer is the biggest threat to their health, but it’s actually heart disease that is the major killer of women of all ages. With published evidence now showing that HRT can reduce cardiovascular mortality by 50% and NICE guidelines advocating its use, I find it outrageous that still so few women have access to these life changing therapies. This study shows there is clearly a huge gap in education of General Practitioners as to the most appropriate options.”

Consultant gynaecologist Amanda Tozer is joint lead of the Libera centre and has a special interest in menstrual disorders, polycystic ovarian disease (PCOS) as well as the menopause. She adds;

“The signs and symptoms of the menopause can be broken down into what we call the ‘seven witches’ - Itchy, B*itchy, Sweaty, Sleepy, Bloated, Forgetful and Psycho. Most women suffer many of these symptoms and yet this research shows a high proportion (22%) of them are still being treated with antidepressants, which really neither address the main problem nor do they help safeguard against the truly genuine threats to their health.”

Menopause is the stage in a woman's life when their periods stop permanently, signalling the end of their reproductive years. It happens when there are no more eggs in their ovaries. Because eggs
stimulate the body to produce oestrogen, the levels of oestrogen in the blood drop, resulting in menopausal changes in the body when these resources are exhausted. Anne continues;

“Whilst the menopause is a perfectly natural occurrence, the decreased levels of oestrogen and other hormones can lead to a range of symptoms, as oestrogen has an effect on almost every tissue in the body. Oestrogen also helps protect women against heart disease. During the menopause, as oestrogen levels drop, the level of fat in a woman's blood can increase. These changes put women at risk of developing disorders such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stroke and heart disease.”

An estimated 1.5 million women – around 80% of those going through menopause – experience some symptoms, which typically continue for around 4 years after the last period. But for around 10% of women, symptoms can last for up to 12 years. The average age for menopause in the UK is 51 but it can vary widely depending on lifestyle and ethnicity, and premature menopause affects 1 in 100 women under the age of 40.

In the past there have been some worries about the possible increased risk of breast cancer in women using HRT, however one of the world's largest studies in the area has proven that there is actually a significant reduction in death, heart attacks, and hospitalization for heart failure in women taking HRT with no increased risk of cancer (including breast cancer).

The NICE guidelines published last year (the first of their kind in the UK) state:
- Offer women HRT for hot flushes and night sweats after discussing risks and benefits
- Consider HRT to ease low mood that arises as a result of the menopause
- Do not routinely offer antidepressants
- Consider testosterone supplementation for menopausal women with low sexual desire if HRT alone is not effective.

It is in this context that Nuada Medical have launched the Libera Centre - a menopause specialist clinic, designed by women, for women. Libera is run by Amanda Tozer and Anne Henderson, both experts in the field and has been designed to help women gain access to the best and most individualised treatment within 24 hours. The centre will allow women a consultation with experts alongside state of the art diagnostic techniques. Crucially, should HRT and/or testosterone be needed these will be made easily available.

**Survey highlights**
- Over half (51%) of women are being inappropriately treated or ignored entirely
- Of those, a whopping 29% were not offered any medication or support at all, and over one out of five (22%) being given antidepressants – with London being the most likely to do this at nearly a third (31%)
- HRT, the most common prescription, was offered only in two out of five (42%) cases, with Scotland being the least likely to prescribe them at just under a quarter (24%) as well as being the most likely to offer nothing at all (50%)
- Testosterone was only offered to 12% - with NONE AT ALL being prescribed in the South East, East Midlands, Northern Ireland or Yorkshire and the Humber
- Just under one in ten (9%) were given an intra-uterine device such as Mirena
- Areas least likely to offer anything at all were Wales, the North West and Scotland (in that order)

The Royal College of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians admit there is a clear problem. According to the RCGP, “We continue to under serve this vulnerable group and it's vital that the evidence based guidelines from NICE are used to help.”

The British Menopause Society website quotes Dr Heather Currie, Chair of the Society;
“The menopause affects all women and can have significant consequences both on impact of symptoms and later health problems. Despite this, many women are unaware of the effects and are confused about benefits and risks of treatment options.”

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About Nuada Medical
Nuada Medical (www.nuadamedical.com) is a specialist healthcare organisation providing precision diagnostics and nuanced care in gynaecology, urology, spinal pain and imaging. Based in three state-of-the-art facilities within the Harley Street Medical Area and owned and run by practitioners, this co-ownership underpins the Nuada approach leading to a culture of innovation, efficient cross referrals and a patient-centric approach.

The centre incorporates a Siemens Verio 3T MRI scanner and is bringing techniques that have been previously confined to clinical research into routine clinical practice in the private sector. As part of its commitment to moving from clinical research to routine clinical practice, Nuada Medical works with a number of the leading radiologists in the UK, particularly in the areas of urology, neurology, gynaecology and oncology.

For all media enquiries please contact Ms. Tingy Simoes on 020 7549 2863 or email tsimoes@wavelengthgroup.com

1 https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG23
2 https://menopauseuk.org/resources/map-of-menopause-services/
3 http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/295889.php
4 http://writehealth.co.uk/testosterone-implants-available-in-the-uk/
5 http://www.imociety.org/manage/images/pdf/a823762338f365490761dccc8e792ccc.pdf