

PARADIGM SHIFT: The new name tells a completely different story from cysts. It recognises a whole-body systemic disorder rather than a localised reproductive issue

What **PMOS** Actually Affects

HORMONAL HEALTH: Multiple endocrine glands regulated by the hypothalamus — the ovaries, thyroid glands, pancreas, and pituitary.

INSULIN SECRETION:

Excess insulin aggressively stimulates the ovaries to overproduce male hormones (androgens), creating a vicious feedback loop

INFLAMMATORY RESPONSE: Chronic, low-grade inflammation runs throughout the body, contributing to long-term cardiovascular risk and accelerated biological ageing

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH:

Fertility challenges are entirely real, but they are just one manifestation among many — not the defining feature of the condition

OVULATION: Irregular or absent ovulation is a downstream consequence of hormonal and metabolic chaos, not the cause

A name may seem minor, but in medicine, terminology shapes better patient understanding

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‘CYST’ MYTH BUSTED: PCOS is now PMOS

UNNIKRISHNAN S @T'Puram

FOR years, Ishitha assumed her irregular periods and stubborn weight gain were just inherited traits. When a gynaecologist in Kochi diagnosed her at 23 with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), she spent hours online bewildered. Like most young women in India, the word 'ovary' instantly conjured anxieties about marriage and fertility. Yet, she could not fathom what structural fluid sacs on her ovaries had to do with her chronic brain fog, anxiety, and prediabetic blood sugar. The answer is almost nothing.

That confusion — shared by millions of Indian women — is precisely why an international panel of scientists has formally renamed the condition. PCOS is now polycystic ovarian syndrome (PMOS). Published in *The Lancet*, this change corrects a deeply misleading medical misnomer. The old name pointed at the wrong thing — those 'cysts' on ultrasounds were actually just arrested egg follicles. By anchoring the diagnosis solely in ovaries, medicine obscured how the condition disrupts a woman's hormonal and metabolic architecture.

"The new name reflects the true nature of the condition — a chronic, multisystem endocrine-metabol-

ic disorder. It shifts the focus from ovarian morphology to the broader hormonal and metabolic implications,” said Dr Reji Mohan, associate professor in reproductive medicine at Government Medical College, Thiruvananthapuram.

India has a massive stake in this rebranding. Between 16% and 18% of Indian women live with PMOS—far above the global average. Crucially, South Asian women develop metabolic complications much earlier and at lower body weights than western populations. A woman can be slim by every conventional standard and still carry severe insulin resistance. Clinicians call this ‘lean PMOS,’ and because it defies traditional weight stereotypes, it is being missed every single day.

These diagnostic blind spots have created a heavily fragmented healthcare experience. Research shows a most 85% of Indian patients had to consult multiple doctors before receiving a clear explanation. The old name fed this cycle: women with weight issues went to one specialist, those with acne or hair loss to another, and those struggling emotionally to a third. No single doctor looked at the whole picture because the name itself buried the underlying systemic link.

Modern lifestyle patterns are accelerating the crisis. Clinicians

across Kerala are reporting a sharp spike in PMOS cases among women in their early twenties. Many visit outpatient clinics primarily for infertility, entirely unaware that their broader metabolic health is compromised.

“High consumption of processed foods, irregular meal timings, prolonged screen time, and poor sleep cycles are all aggravating hormonal imbalance. Stress from academics, work pressure, and social media play a significant role.” said Dr Reji Mohan.

For women who have lived for years with the distressing phrase “cysts on the ovaries,” this sudden nomenclature shift can trigger fresh anxieties about past diagnoses or scans. However, frontline physicians emphasize that this is an evolution in medical language, not a clinical error.

“Their diagnosis remains accurate and the treatment plan unchanged. What has evolved is our scientific understanding. This is not a contradiction — it is an invitation to look beyond fertility and consider overall health.” said Dr Reji Mohan.

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