

News from

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HALF OF AT-RISK WOMEN PATIENTS NOT GETTING DRUGS TO PROTECT BONES

One in two women at high risk of bone fractures don't receive preventative treatment, according to new research presented at the British Pharmaceutical Conference (BPC) in Manchester.

Pharmacists in Northumberland,* where the hip fracture hospital admission rate is one of the highest in the UK, conducted the study. The study groups also included North Tyneside, which has a high mortality rate after falls.¹

According to the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), women who have had a previous "fragility" bone fracture or are diagnosed with osteoporosis¹; and women over 75 with osteoporosis, or who have had a fragility fracture; should receive treatment with calcium/vitamin D3 and bisphosphonate.¹

The new research aimed to find out if the NICE criteria and bone protection treatments were being met in a general practice population. The results showed that of the patients found to be at risk of future fractures, only half were receiving the recommended bone protection treatment (calcium/vitamin D3 with a bisphosphonate).

Those aged below 74 and at risk should have treatment based on the results of a bone scan, but the study showed this occurred in only a quarter of all cases.

Pharmacy research into medicine-taking for osteoporosis in Glasgow, Scotland, looked at whether patients were compliant with taking medications they had been prescribed for osteoporosis. They found that of the 353 at-risk patients, **70%** were taking a bisphosphonate and calcium supplement as osteoporosis prevention therapy, but **almost a quarter** did not always take their medication.

The reasons patients listed for not taking their medicine included that they: forgot (**46%**); disliked the taste (**22%**); were fed up taking it (**7%**) and were unsure of the indication (**2%**). Others did not understand sufficient detail about the appropriate way to take the medication.

In Scotland, one in three women and one in 12 men over the age of 50 are affected by osteoporosis, resulting in 20,000 bone fractures every year.²

Wasim Baqir, the Research and Development Lead Pharmacist for Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust and a Primary Care Pharmacist said: "It's very important that people who are at risk of falling and fracturing bones receive appropriate bone protection treatment. Pharmacists have a key role to play in helping patients understand the importance of why they are prescribed these preventative medicines, and what the consequences can be if they don't take them."

Ends

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Notes to Editors

* Pharmacists took part in the research from Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, North Tyneside Hospital, Sunderland University, and The Science Complex.

Northumberland/Tyneside research:

The medical system of a 12,500 patient practice in North Tyneside was searched for patients with documented fragility fractures and osteoporosis. Records of these at-risk patients identified the number of fractures, whether bone scanning was undertaken and what bone

protection treatments were being used. Poor or no compliance with bone protection treatment was defined as having not ordered at least one prescription or not ordering any prescriptions, in the last six months, respectively.

128 patients were identified as being at risk of future fractures.

Scottish research:

Fifty two pharmacies administered a structured questionnaire on osteoporosis medication to 353 patient or carers.

The British Pharmaceutical Conference - entitled "[The medicines maze: balancing risks and benefits](#)" - takes place from 10th to 12th September, 2007, at Manchester Central (formerly Manchester International Convention Centre). The theme of BPC 2007 is reflected throughout the programme, with keynote speeches and workshops addressing crucial technical and professional issues that are facing pharmacy today. The conference will showcase the latest developments in pharmaceutical science and practice research and include discussion and debate led by expert speakers.

References

1. Sibal, Bharat. North Tyneside Falls Mortality and Related Indicators. June 2006.
2. Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) management of Osteoporosis. Edinburgh: SIGN; 2004 (SIGN publication no.71).