

Failure to prevent fractures costing VIC more than \$700 million each year: Osteoporosis Australia report

Launch of national SOS Fracture Alliance to 'make the first break the last'

The brittle bones of Victorians aged 50 plus are expected to cost \$777 million in 2017,¹ while the total cost over 10 years will climb to \$5.5 billion by 2022.¹

This is according to the first State report analysing the costs and burden of poor bone health for Victoria, set for release by Osteoporosis Australia today (June 27, 2017).

Release of the *Osteoporosis costing Victoria: A burden of disease analysis* report, will coincide with the launch of the independent SOS Fracture Alliance – Australia's only national alliance of 30 medical, allied health, patient and consumer organisations focusing on the prevention of osteoporotic fractures.

According to report co-author and Head, Musculoskeletal Science and Health Economics team, Institute for Health and Ageing, Professor Kerrie Sanders, Melbourne, "1.36 million Victorians aged 50 and above are currently living with brittle bones.¹ This figure is expected to climb to 1.53 million within the next five years,¹ leading to a cascade of fractures, which could be prevented, saving millions of dollars and improving patient lives.

"Our report estimates by 2022, there will be 47,000 fractures in Victoria each year."¹

"A broken bone is usually a sign that we need to take action to prevent more bone loss, as each fracture significantly raises the risk of a further fracture,"¹ said Osteoporosis Australia Medical Director, Professor Peter Ebeling AO, Melbourne.

"What is extremely worrying is that four-out-of-five Australians treated for an osteoporotic fracture are not tested for osteoporosis, and therefore, are not offered treatment for osteoporosis."²

"There is a significant gap in osteoporosis care, and our hospitals are becoming revolving doors for fracture patients being sent home, and returning with new fractures, rather than being properly assessed and treated for osteoporosis."

Founder and Chair of the SOS Fracture Alliance, Professor Markus Seibel, Sydney said Australians are being unnecessarily left to endure the pain of repeated fractures, and should regard the new figures as a serious public health warning.

"Two-thirds of Victorian residents aged 50 and above have poor bone health or osteoporosis, and many don't know it, even when they have obvious risk factors, or already have sustained a fracture,"¹ Prof Seibel said.

"More often than not, people are sent home, after their fracture has been 'fixed', and miss out on essential investigation and care which in many cases would prevent further fractures.

"The SOS Fracture Alliance is seeking to increase recognition nation-wide of first fractures in people with undiagnosed osteoporosis, to make their first break the last," said Prof Seibel.

"This is why the SOS Fracture Alliance strongly advocates the implementation, across the nation, of routine services that identify, investigate and treat patients with osteoporotic fractures. These secondary fracture prevention services will integrate all sectors of the health system, in particular, primary care and hospital-based services."

Retired AFL player turned coach and fitness fanatic, David, 74, Melbourne was diagnosed with osteoporosis in the spine in 2011 at age 69, after running down a flight of stairs below Flinders St Railway Station, and fracturing eight thoracic vertebra.

Despite surviving prostate cancer in 2008, David's health had up until then, generally been extremely good.

"At the time, my lack of mobility and the associated pain certainly reduced my daily effectiveness and efficiency.

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“Under the guidance of my specialist, for the next three years I had osteoporosis treatment, on top of a specific weight lifting program, and an increased intake of calcium,” David said.

“Fortunately now, at almost 74 years of age, my latest scans show remarkable improvement in the bone density of my spine as a result of treatment, my exercise regime, and concentrated calcium intake.”

David is supportive of the new SOS Fracture Alliance, citing “due to my early and accurate diagnosis, expert medical guidance, appropriate treatment and support, I continue to live a very normal, active life!”

According to CEO of Osteoporosis Australia, Greg Lyubomirsky, Sydney, urgent action is needed to improve health outcomes for patients and their families.

“Breaking a bone is an immediate and ongoing medical emergency. It involves time in hospital, surgery, rehabilitation and often home care.

“Fractures adversely impact patients and their families. Fractures disrupt daily activities, are painful, and take a long time to recover from,” said Mr Lyubomirsky.

“It is our collective responsibility to stop osteoporotic fractures from occurring.

“Fractures are an important cause of death in older people, and require the same focus and attention as heart attacks and stroke,” Mr Lyubomirsky said.

“Yet, we know too many fracture patients are leaving hospital without appropriate investigation for osteoporosis.¹

“Our report released today clearly demonstrates the high cost to the healthcare system of the growing numbers of preventable fractures.¹ We must do better,” said Mr Lyubomirsky.

Osteoporosis affects women and men, and occurs when bones lose their quality and strength, weakening the skeleton.³ Osteoporotic-fractures most often occur in the spine, hip, wrist, upper arm, ribs, and pelvis.³ Proper medical investigation and management can halve the risk of further fracture.³

Direct costs of managing fractures from osteoporosis include ambulance services, hospitalisations, emergency and outpatient departments, rehabilitation and community services.¹ These are preventable costs.

About the VIC report

The ***Osteoporosis costing Victoria: A burden of disease analysis*** report forms part of a series of reports commissioned by Osteoporosis Australia, and co-authored by health economics experts from the Australian Catholic University and Deakin University. The report investigates the rising costs and burden of poor bone health and related fractures.¹

The report reveals 113 fractures occur each day among residents aged over 50 in Victoria.¹ The total costs of brittle bones in those aged 50 and above in Victoria is projected to reach \$777 million this year, \$539 million (69 per cent) of which will relate directly to fracture costs.¹ By 2022, it is estimated 47,171 fractures will occur each year (130 per day).¹

About the SOS Fracture Alliance

The Australian National SOS Fracture Alliance unites 30 medical, allied health, patient and consumer organisations under its umbrella. The more than 2.91 million individual members have one common goal – to ‘*make the first break the last*’ by improving nation-wide care for patients presenting with a minimal trauma fracture. The SOS Fracture Alliance is working to close this gap in osteoporosis care by addressing the fact that the overwhelming majority of patients who sustain an osteoporotic fracture receive no investigation, nor treatment to prevent further fractures. Comparatively, Australia has one of the world’s poorest rates of identifying and managing osteoporotic fractures appropriately – some 70 to 80 per cent of women who have broken a bone and would therefore qualify for osteoporosis treatment, are not investigated or diagnosed, nor receive appropriate medical care.^{1,4} As a result, the numbers of preventable fractures impacting patients, their families and the healthcare system are steadily growing.

For more information about osteoporosis and the *Osteoporosis costing Victoria: A burden of disease analysis* report, visit www.osteoporosis.org.au/burdenofdisease. For more information about the SOS Fracture Alliance, visit www.SOSfracturealliance.org.au.

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DIGITAL MEDIA KIT: Available for download TUES, JUNE 27, 2017 at www.fracturepreventionmediakit.org

To learn more, visit: osteoporosis.org.au/burdenofdisease & SOSfracturealliance.org.au

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References

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