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GPs urged to discuss medication compliance with patients to reduce fracture risk

'Treatment holidays' far too common; within 12 months, 75% of patients will stop therapy¹

Osteoporosis Australia has today launched a new GP resource and calls on GPs to reinforce the important role of medication compliance in reducing the risk of fracture in their discussions with osteoporosis patients about their overall bone health.

Overall compliance with osteoporosis medication continues to be poor, despite clinical evidence demonstrating that adherence reduces the rate of fractures¹. In fact, within 12 months of commencing treatment, 75 per cent of patients will stop therapy¹.

Once diagnosed, prescribed medicines play an essential role in the management of osteoporosis by preventing further bone loss, and in many cases, making bones stronger². Despite these benefits, and because bones are hidden and osteoporosis is typically asymptomatic, patients tend to not understand or see how the medication is working and therefore discontinue treatment. This in turn increases their risk of fracture².

Broken bones can lead to chronic pain, a loss of independence, disability and even premature death³.

“What we’re increasingly hearing from patients is that they are going on ‘treatment holidays’ with or without the consent of their GPs. What they don’t realise is that by stopping their osteoporosis medication they are greatly increasing their risk of a fracture², said Gail Morgan, CEO, Osteoporosis Australia. “This needs to change if we are to improve patient outcomes.”

“In order to decrease this risk of fracture, we are urging all GPs to talk regularly with patients about how to protect their bone health by taking their medications as prescribed, in addition to adopting other healthy lifestyle habits that have been shown to help increase bone strength.”

The aim of the new resource is to ensure treatment compliance is top of mind for GPs when discussing overall bone health with their osteoporosis patients. The resource provides GPs with tips to offer holistic care to patients that may help prevent fractures and increase adherence. These tips include setting dosing reminders, taking necessary dietary supplements, staying active, keeping a health and wellness journal and seeing a GP regularly.

“Managing the bone health of patients with osteoporosis to avoid fractures should be a clinical priority for all treating clinicians as evidence demonstrates that compliance rates reduce the rate of fracture,” said Ms Morgan. “By offering bone health tips to patients, GPs are providing a benchmark for patients to work towards to make sure they’re doing all that they can to prevent breaking bones.”

As the Australian population ages, the incidence of osteoporosis will increase³. Currently, 1.2 million Australians have osteoporosis and more than 6 million Australians have osteopenia or low bone density⁴. Osteoporosis is a life-long disease and once diagnosed most patients will need long-term, continuous medication in order to lower their risk of fracture².



Osteoporosis not only greatly impacts patients, but is also associated with alarming costs to Government, the community and to individuals⁵. It is projected that the total direct and indirect cost of osteoporosis, osteopenia and associated fractures over the next 10 years will be \$33.6 billion⁵.

The resource is available to GPs for download on the Osteoporosis Australia website.

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