

Women Fail to Realize Increased Fracture Risk

BY MICHELE G. SULLIVAN

WASHINGTON — Most women susceptible to fragility fractures fail to appreciate those risks, even if they have been told by a physician that they have osteoporosis, a large international survey-based study has concluded.

“We found a remarkable failure of many women to perceive that these clear-cut factors are putting them at increased risk for a fracture,” said Dr. Ethel Siris, an investigator for GLOW (Global Longitudinal Study of Osteoporosis in Women).

GLOW included more than 60,000 postmenopausal women who were recruited from 706 physician practices in 10 countries. The women completed questionnaires on demographic and medical information, risk factors for fragility fracture, any personal history of and treatment for osteoporosis, and health and functional status.

Comparing themselves with women of the same age, 64% of subjects with risk factors for fracture did not perceive themselves at increased risk, Dr. Siris

said in an interview. Even more surprising, she said, 55% of women who had been told by a physician that they had osteoporosis thought that they were not at increased risk.

Women with other risk factors displayed a similar ignorance, Dr. Siris noted. Of women whose mother had experienced a hip fracture, 74% thought they were at a lower fracture risk than their peers or had a similar risk, as did 74% of

those with a low body mass index, 80% of current smokers, 77% of those who frequently consumed alcohol, 61% of those taking corticosteroids, and 71% of those with rheumatoid arthritis.

The replies were consistent across countries, she said at an international symposium sponsored by the National Osteoporosis Foundation. “There is apparently a worldwide problem with communicating these ideas to patients.”

The failure to appreciate the implications of fracture risk may help account for the “lousy adherence” to osteoporosis therapy, said Dr. Siris, director of the osteoporosis center at Columbia University, New York.

Dr. Siris disclosed that she has received consulting fees for her time working on GLOW from Sanofi-Aventis and Procter & Gamble Co., which funded the project. ■

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Vitamin D in Diet Linked to Melanoma Risk

MONTREAL — Increased vitamin D intake is not protective against melanoma, according to the results of the largest prospective cohort study presented by Dr. Maryam M. Asgari of Kaiser Permanente in Oakland, Calif.

Her study, presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Investigative Dermatology, suggests a trend toward a greater risk of melanoma with high dietary intake of vitamin D.

“When we looked at diet alone there was a slightly increased risk, but when we combined diet and supplement use, the risk washed out,” she said in an interview.

The cohort comprised 68,611 participants in the Vitamins and Cohort Lifestyle study. The average age was 62 years; 52% were female.

The researchers studied dietary intake of vitamin D and other nutrients in the preceding year, and supplement use over the past 10 years.

There was no evidence of an association between supplement use and an increased or decreased risk of melanoma, reported Dr. Asgari.

However, there was a nonsignificant trend toward a protective effect at the higher supplement doses.

When supplement use was examined in combination with dietary intake, there was no association with melanoma risk. However, high dietary intake alone was significantly associated with a slightly increased risk of melanoma.

—Kate Johnson



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