



WOMEN'S HEALTH

Protecting Our Bones

(NAPSA)—Osteoporosis, a disease characterized by fragile bones that are easily broken, is so severe a problem in the U.S. that the Surgeon General recently put it on par with smoking and obesity as a major public health threat. A key part to protecting bone health in patients with osteoporosis is taking medication, yet most don't stick with treatment. A new national survey looked at why this is happening and what can be done about it.

Released by the Alliance for Aging Research, the survey highlights the importance of doctors understanding their patients' fears about osteoporosis and how those fears can motivate them to treat the disease. The majority of the 752 women with osteoporosis surveyed (57 percent) say that the desire to remain healthy and independent is why they take an osteoporosis medication. Yet recent studies, looking at prescription use, show that almost two-thirds of patients discontinue their osteoporosis medicine after a year.

"There are serious consequences of untreated disease. Maybe not right away but down the road," says Daniel Perry, executive director of the Alliance. "Physicians and patients need to be speaking a common language to encourage more patients with osteoporosis to start and stay on medication since the medication won't work if you don't take it."

Seventy percent of the 352 doctors surveyed admit that patients not staying on osteoporosis medication is a problem in their practice. According to the survey, side effects, no perceived benefits of therapy and taking too many pills for other conditions are some of



The Alliance for Aging Research has developed a new guide that can help doctors and patients communicate better about osteoporosis. To sign up for the free guide visit www.agingresearch.org.

the reasons why. Doctor-patient communication issues may also be a contributing factor.

According to Dr. Sydney L. Bonnick, Medical Director of the Clinical Research Center of North Texas in Denton, TX, "Patients increase their risk of fracture when they stop taking their medications. One approach is to simplify the treatment regimen to make it easier for them to stick with therapy. Physicians also need to understand what motivates patients to stay on therapy and speak to them in those terms."

In response to the survey results, the Alliance has developed a free discussion guide to help facilitate better communication between doctors and patients about osteoporosis and the importance of sticking with treatment. Both doctors and patients can access the guide at www.agingresearch.org.

The survey was conducted by Opinion Research Corporation in collaboration with the Alliance. Support and assistance for the survey campaign was provided by GlaxoSmithKline and Roche.