



# **BONE DENSITY & OSTEOPOROSIS: An Update for Manitoba Physicians**

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## **“Closing The Post Fracture Care Gap In Manitoba”**

*What is this about?*

This is the title of a new patient care initiative from the Manitoba Patient Access Network and the Manitoba Bone Density Program which is starting up in Manitoba and will run for the next three years. The objective is to improve osteoporosis care in older men and women who have suffered a fracture that may indicate the presence of osteoporosis.

*What will happen?*

Although osteoporosis can be identified with a bone mineral density (BMD) test, most individuals with osteoporosis are not diagnosed until they fracture. Surprisingly, even after a typical osteoporotic fracture, very few women and almost no men undergo BMD testing. Post-fracture care often “falls between the cracks” when there is a breakdown in communication between hospital and community, or between specialists and primary care physicians. Often physicians and patients fail to make the connection between an acute fracture and osteoporosis, or the value of secondary prevention strategies. If untreated, there is an extremely high rate of additional fractures after a first osteoporotic fracture. It follows that improving BMD testing and/or treatment in appropriately identified individuals is a necessary step in optimizing post-fracture patient care. Over the next three years we will be testing and optimizing a notification procedure to physicians and/or patients relying upon fracture events reported to Manitoba Health. This intervention will be provincial in scope and will include both BMD testing services in Manitoba (Winnipeg and Brandon). The use of appropriate post-fracture investigations and treatment will be periodically evaluated.

For the next year, individuals with a newly reported fracture (spine, hip, wrist, humerus) will be randomized to usual care (no intervention), physician notification or physician & patient notification. The notification will provide a general recommendation for osteoporosis assessment. Information letters under Manitoba Health letterhead will be sent out to the physician(s) and/or patient connected with a fracture. To address concerns over discontinuous care of patients seen at the time of fracture and for subsequent follow-up, the physician notification will specifically target the individual involved in the initial report to Manitoba Health as well as the primary care physician most recently involved in the patient’s care. The aim is to enhance the primary care physician’s knowledge of their patient’s recent fracture history. The notification will provide a general recommendation for osteoporosis assessment in addition to a copy of the BMD testing requisition since BMD testing is usually (but not always) justified in this setting. The notification will not dictate what testing or treatment needs to be performed, since it is felt that this is a decision best made between the treating physician and patient as part of an informed discussion.

*What are the  
benefits?*

All clinical practice guidelines stress that the patient with established fragility fractures is at highest risk for recurrent fractures. This initiative will enhance patient care by targeting care towards those that will derive the greatest benefit from treatment. If successful, this will provide a rational long-term strategy for enhancing the care of these patients who are at high risk for additional fractures, and represent the most cost-effective group for treatment.

Any questions or concerns should be directed to Dr. W. D. Leslie at St. Boniface General Hospital, Director of the Manitoba Bone Density Program.

This newsletter and other program information are available through the Manitoba Health web site (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/programs/mbd>).