

Call to Action

Hip fractures are breaking the bank and lives – Are you ready to stop the UK reaching 'Breaking Point'?

A high percentage of the health budget is spent on maintaining the health of vital organs, while the skeleton, a vital linchpin, is largely ignored.

Why is this important?

Imagine spending the rest of your life consigned to looking at the floor and not being able to turn your face to the sun, being crippled by pain and not able to carry out simple everyday tasks. This is the reality for many people with severe osteoporosis.

Over two million women in the UK have osteoporosis,¹ a debilitating yet preventable, disease of brittle bones, which causes one in two women and one in five men aged over 50 years to suffer a fracture.² The risk of a woman over 50 years of age suffering from a fracture is greater than them suffering from breast cancer or cardiovascular disease,² but as a society we have failed to recognise and respond adequately to the real and avoidable threat it poses to every woman in our families.

For thousands of people with osteoporosis the current outlook is bleak. Hip fracture rates in the UK are amongst the highest in the EU³ – one third of women with the disease are undiagnosed⁴ and even after a fracture the majority of women receive no treatment.² This causes needless suffering, pain and a loss of independence for thousands of people.

Can we afford to ignore osteoporosis any longer?

The current situation is untenable for our already stretched health and social care systems and the forecast is foreboding. With burgeoning numbers of people affected by osteoporosis and health and social care systems ailing under the weight of the cost, it is time for this 'silent' epidemic to be heard as a policy priority. It can no longer be a case of if we should, but rather, can we as a society afford not to take this disease seriously?

- Hip fractures alone, cost the UK an estimated £5 million per day – that is £2 billion pounds per year.³ The cost to treat one hip fracture is £13,000 in the first year and £7,000 for the subsequent year⁵
- Furthermore, fragility fractures account for costly aftercare, with an average hospital stay of 26 days and over 1,000 deaths each month^{2,6}
- The current population and incidence projections developed by the National Hip Fracture Database, suggest that by 2020 the cost of managing a hip fracture will rise by 50% to £3 billion per year⁷

“As people live longer they're more likely to live for more of their life with at least one long-term condition... It's estimated that by 2025 over six million older people will be suffering from a debilitating long-term illness... the number of people with osteoporosis will have increased to over four million... an increase of up to 50% from today”

David Cameron, Prime Minister

What can be done?

At the moment osteoporosis is under-diagnosed and under-treated. While there is no cure, we know we can drive down the incidence of fractures through effective and timely prevention.

Clinicians, campaigners and professionals are calling for a nationwide systematic approach to fracture care and prevention. Fracture Liaison Services (FLS) are seen as the cornerstone of this. Based in either hospitals or linked to a GP surgery, each FLS has a specially trained nurse to identify every patient that has had a fragility fracture and ensure they are offered an assessment for osteoporosis and appropriate treatment.³

There is strong evidence to demonstrate that the FLS approach is effective in reducing fracture rates, improving compliance and actually saving money. According to the Department of Health, adopting the FLS model in England could help to save more than £8 million over a five-year period⁹ and this model has been recommended in the Department of Health's *Prevention Package for Older People*.⁴

However, a 2009 audit showed that only 29% of NHS Acute Trusts had a fracture liaison nurse in place.¹⁰ Once again, it means there is a 'postcode lottery' in terms of equality of access, care and treatment for the thousands of sufferers across the UK.

We are calling to end to this 'postcode lottery' and for a FLS to be introduced in every PCT across the UK – it should be a universal service for people wherever they live.

What can you do?

The NHS has a directive to make efficiency savings of £15–20 billion by 2014.¹¹ A FLS in every PCT across the UK would constitute a saving to the public purse, reduce fracture rates and help prevent 1,150 people dying needlessly every month as a result of a hip fracture.²

You **can** help save lives and money. We are asking you to write to the new Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley MP, to drive this agenda forward. We need strong leadership from the Government to:

- Include hip fracture reduction as a key metric in the NHS Outcomes Framework
- Ensure every PCT introduces a FLS in their area

- Call for the development of an osteoporosis NICE Quality Standard in order to benefit patient outcomes
- Drive for better management of osteoporosis in primary care, including the inclusion of osteoporosis in the Quality and Outcomes Framework, which offers financial rewards for GPs treating specific conditions
- Promote an improvement in fracture care through the use of Best Practice Tariffs

If you need any further information about osteoporosis or the current state of osteoporosis management in the UK, please visit the National Osteoporosis Society (NOS) website at www.nos.org.uk.

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