

Pharmacists can play key role in fight against osteoporosis: study

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University of Alberta researcher Nese Yuksel says pharmacists could be integral to the education and screening of people for osteoporosis, as pharmacists are easily accessible and are playing a greater role in health promotion and disease prevention.

According to [Osteoporosis](#) Canada, after the age of 50 one in four women has the disease and at least one in eight men. Yuksel says a major issue is that it's a silent disease that often goes undiagnosed, and that's where pharmacists can help.

Yuksel and her research team did a study involving 262 patients at various Alberta pharmacies. The group was made up of people who were potentially at high risk for osteoporosis, which includes people over 65 and those between the ages of 50 and 64 who had at least one risk factor, including a previous fracture, a family history of osteoporosis and early menopause.

The group was split into a control group and an intervention group. Patients in the control group were given an information brochure then asked to come back in 16 weeks for a follow-up meeting. Those in the intervention group went through a more in-depth process. They spoke with a pharmacist about osteoporosis, the [risk factors](#) of the disease and screening processes for assessment of osteoporosis. The patients then went through a heel ultrasound test; a test to measure bone density in the heel, which was used as a tool to help with the risk assessment. After meeting with the pharmacist, the participants were then referred to their

family doctor. This group was followed up at two and eight weeks, and then asked to return for another consultation after 16 weeks.

When the pharmacists met with the patients 16 weeks later, they found that those in the intervention group were two times more likely to get a bone density test or start an osteoporosis medication, meaning the pharmacist intervention was beneficial in helping more people receive further assessment and a diagnosis from their doctor.

Yuksel says this is encouraging information and believes the next step is to find out how osteoporosis education and screening can be incorporated in pharmacies across the province.

These research findings were published in *Osteoporosis International*.

Provided by University of Alberta

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