

Link between fracture prevention and treatment adherence not fully understood by patients

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Newly released findings of a multinational survey conducted on behalf of the International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF) show clear disparities between patients' and doctors' perceptions of osteoporosis and its management.

The 13-country survey of 844 postmenopausal patients over 55 years of age and 837 doctors investigated gaps between patient and doctor understanding of the emotional and physical impact of osteoporosis; identified barriers to patient adherence; and sought to understand the ways in which osteoporotic patients can better share and obtain information about the management of the disease.

Key findings showed:

- Patients are not as well informed as they believe themselves to be
- Patients fear [fractures](#) and worry about their quality of life, but do not always adhere to treatment
- Doctors consistently underestimate their patients adherence to treatment
- Doctors underestimate patients' concerns about fracture, the

impact of osteoporosis on their quality of life and fear of dependency

Adherence to osteoporosis therapy is a serious problem, with studies showing that fewer than 50% of patients still take their prescribed medication after 1 year. This can be attributed to underestimation of personal risk, uncertainty of benefits versus risks of treatment, side-effects, and a belief in the efficacy of lifestyle measures alone. Patients who drop their prescribed treatment unknowingly leave themselves at high risk of fracture.

The survey also showed the willingness of doctors to support initiatives that would improve patient adherence to treatment: 80% of doctors surveyed would be willing to hand out educational materials to increase adherence and 76% would recommend patient programmes that encourage better communication on osteoporosis management.

"As this survey revealed, patient and doctor misconceptions exist on a number of levels," noted IOF CEO Patrice McKenney. "Community-based online support programmes have a great potential to fill these information gaps. They can help patients share their concerns, improve patient-doctor dialogue, allow patient-to-patient contact, encourage long-term adherence to prescribed treatment and help patients to maintain or improve quality of life."

The International Osteoporosis Foundation, in cooperation with national [osteoporosis](#) societies in four pilot countries (Austria, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland), is currently developing a novel community-based platform called 'OsteoLink'. 'OsteoLink' aims to improve communications and facilitate dialogue among patients and between patients and doctors, providing personal networking opportunities and new tools that respond to current unmet needs.

Provided by International Osteoporosis Foundation

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