

New IOF teaching tool helps health professionals identify vertebral fractures

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Vertebral fractures are a common cause of pain and disability – and they are also powerful predictors of future spine and hip fractures. Yet there is evidence that many health professionals simply fail to recognize vertebral fractures in their patients. Even if the fractures are reported, appropriate intervention is often not initiated.

The Vertebral Fracture Initiative, available at <http://www.iofbonehealth.org/health-professionals.html> , has been designed to facilitate the understanding and teaching of osteoporotic vertebral fractures. Teaching slides, which can be easily inserted into presentations, are enhanced by multi-language executive summaries and resource documents that contain the latest information, with commentaries highlighting the key messages.

Dr. Mary Bouxsein of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Harvard Medical School and one of the lead authors of the initiative commented, "Currently, only about 40% of older women with spinal fractures visible on X-ray are tested for osteoporosis. The figure is even lower in men. Without treatment, many of these people will go on to suffer a cascade of osteoporotic fractures that can result in long-term physical impairment."

Radiographic diagnosis is considered the best way to identify and confirm the presence of vertebral fractures in clinical practice. Alternatively, state-of-the-art DXA-based Vertebral Fracture Assessment (VFA), which is nearly as accurate as radiographs in

detecting fractured vertebra, can be performed concurrently with DXA-BMD to diagnose osteoporosis.

"We hope this tool will encourage and assist radiologists and clinicians to accurately diagnose and correctly report fractures," said Professor Harry Genant of the University of California, San Francisco. "[Vertebral fractures](#) should be clearly reported as 'fractured' in the medical reports to avoid ambiguity caused by other terminology. This will help ensure that patients receive effective treatment and thereby prevent subsequent fractures."

Provided by International Osteoporosis Foundation

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