

Men most at risk of osteoporosis least aware of its threat

October 21 2014

The level of awareness among Australian men who are most at risk of osteoporosis is 'deeply concerning' according to a leading expert in bone health.

Professor Peter Ebeling, Medical Director of Osteoporosis Australia and Head, Department of Medicine in the School of Clinical Sciences, Monash University, at Monash Health said the focus on [men](#) on World Osteoporosis Day was appropriate.

"A recent survey from Osteoporosis Australia showed alarming numbers of [young men](#) thought [osteoporosis](#) was rare in men – about 40 per cent of 18-24-year-olds. But more worrying is the number of men 65 and over who had the same view – almost a fifth (19 per cent)," Professor Ebeling said.

"It's a worry that young men aren't aware there is a risk, because it's in those younger years they can work to lower their risk of developing the [bone disease](#) later in life. But if the target audience for information about osteoporosis isn't aware of their risks, that is an even greater problem."

The survey showed increasing levels of awareness about osteoporosis through the age groups, until a drop off at the 65 plus age group.

"The 65 plus group were slightly more likely to think they would not get osteoporosis as the survey average – 59 per cent of those asked did not

think they were at risk of getting it. By comparison only 55 per cent of 35-44 year olds held the same view," Professor Ebeling said.

An international survey of adults in 12 countries found more startling results. The International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF) showed 90 per cent of all adults were unaware of how common fractures are in men, whereas international data show one in five men over the age of 50 years are likely to be affected by a break.

The survey also showed up gaps in how [bone health](#) is managed by doctors. More than 50 per cent of men over 50 years old said they had never had any form of bone assessment during a check up – including being asked about bone health, discussing risk factors for osteoporosis, queries about broken bones or referral for a [bone mineral density](#) test.

Professor Ebeling says this either points to poor communication by health professionals to patients at risk of developing the illness, or the general lack of awareness about bone health in Australia.

"Bones aren't very sexy. It's hard to get the media's attention in the same way as heart disease and diabetes, which have dominated the headlines, despite the prevalence of the illness. In Australia, someone will be admitted to hospital with an osteoporotic fracture about every three minutes," he said.

"If you think about it, without your bones you aren't going anywhere! And it's no help to the health budget with costs of managing fractures caused by osteoporosis estimated to be \$33.6 billion over the next decade. Something needs to be done now."

Provided by Monash University

Citation: Men most at risk of osteoporosis least aware of its threat (2014, October 21) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-10-men-osteoporosis-aware-threat.html>

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