Osteoporosis greatly impacts the lives of older Australians

- 1.2 million Australians have osteoporosis and over 6 million Australians have osteopenia or low bone density. As the population ages, the incidence of osteoporosis will increase.
- Osteoporosis is a life-long disease and once diagnosed most patients will need long-term continuous medication in order to lower their risk of fracture.
- A minor fall, twist of the back or even bumping into something can be enough to cause a fracture in patients with osteoporosis.
- Fractures can lead to chronic pain, a loss of independence, disability and even premature death.
- Managing the bone health of patients with osteoporosis to avoid fractures should be a clinical priority.

Patients are being diagnosed, but are not taking their medication

- Once diagnosed, prescribed medicines play an essential role in the management of osteoporosis. These medicines are proven to prevent further bone loss, and in many cases, make bones stronger.
- Despite these benefits, because bones are hidden and osteoporosis is typically asymptomatic, patients tend to not understand or see how the medication is working and therefore discontinue treatment.
- Compliance with osteoporosis medications is poor, despite adherence reducing the rate of fractures.
- Less than 25% of patients exceed 12 months without stopping therapy.

Osteoporosis medication compliance is essential in order to prevent fractures

- Clinical evidence demonstrates compliance reduces the rate of fracture.
- One study on hip and vertebral fractures reports a decrease of 60% in the risk of hip fracture at 12 months in patients who persisted in taking their medication compared to those who did not.

Tips for helping patients better adhere to their medications

- It is important to talk regularly with patients about how to protect their bone health by taking their medications as prescribed, in addition to other healthy lifestyle habits.
- The following tips for patients may help increase medication compliance and prevent fractures:
  1. Set a diary note to take your medication
  2. Ensure you are getting enough calcium and vitamin D
  3. Stay active. Exercise can maintain or increase bone strength
  4. Keep a journal on your overall health and wellness and jot down any aches or pains
  5. See your GP regularly

References