

Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

FOCUS on Advocacy

(Fractures = Osteoporosis Care for Us)

Inaugural Forum

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Hundreds of thousands of Canadians needlessly fracture each year because their osteoporosis goes undiagnosed and untreated. Those who are at greatest risk of breaking a bone are those who have *already* fractured because of something so simple as a trip, a sneeze, or a warm hug. And yet, fewer than 20% of fracture patients are ever offered assessment and/or treatment for their underlying osteoporosis. This means that in Canada, osteoporosis has a care gap of 80%.

In order to try and improve this dismal statistic, the National Board of Directors of Osteoporosis Canada took the progressive step of designating the osteoporosis care gap as their highest priority. In addition to raising awareness by educating healthcare professionals and providing educational materials to fracture patients, it is critical that mechanisms be put into place to ensure that an assessment for and treatment of osteoporosis be done for each and every fracture patient. This involves simple yet integral changes within the current healthcare system that require the collaboration of provincial governments in order to make this a reality throughout Canada.

To discuss these necessary changes and to plan their implementation, Osteoporosis Canada hosted its Inaugural Focus Forum on November 12-14, 2011.

The Focus Forum was attended by a multi-disciplinary group of health professionals and OC volunteers from across Canada. The participants included:

- 17 allied health professionals
- 13 family physicians
- 13 OC volunteers of various types (Board, COPN, Chapters)
- 11 osteoporosis experts (endocrinologists, rheumatologists, internists, etc.)
- 8 orthopaedic surgeons (including the President of the Canadian Orthopaedic Association)
- 6 radiologists
- 4 geriatricians

Compelling presentations from members of Osteoporosis Canada's Scientific Advisory Council highlighted a variety of research studies on different interventions that have been piloted both in Canada and internationally, including their effectiveness and challenges. Also inspirational were an expert presentation of a real world experience that has proven effective (Glasgow's Fracture Liaison Service) in the UK and additional sessions on advocacy techniques to help develop an advocacy strategy appropriate for each province.

Armed with the latest evidence based information and the experiences of top advocacy experts, the Focus Forum participants then discussed the individual needs of each province and systematically developed specific mechanisms to address the problem of the osteoporosis care gap region by region. These plans will soon be introduced to each provincial government for the purpose of influencing policy makers to make the necessary health system changes that we hope will significantly reduce fracture risk among Canadians.

The end result is that an enthusiastic and committed group of volunteers from each province have returned home to work with their provincial governments in the implementation of practical strategies aimed at finally closing Canada's Osteoporosis Care Gap. It's about time, Canada. Together, we can do this!



FUNNY BONE:

"We all get heavier as we get older, because there's a lot more information in our heads. That's my story and I'm sticking to it."

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