



Osteoporosis Canada

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COPING
**The E-newsletter of the
Canadian Osteoporosis Patient Network (COPN)**

December, 2006

December 1, 2006

During the month of November the Globe and Mail newspaper ran an article by Dr. Marla Shapiro, a physician, Associate Professor at the University of Toronto, writer/speaker on health issues based in Toronto and an important representative for Osteoporosis Canada.

The article, titled "Self-diagnose off the Web at your peril" (November 7), shared some thoughts about how individuals use the Internet to find information, particularly medical and health information.

Reputable medical journals, such as Chest and Lancet, which are peer-reviewed, highly regarded publications have recently examined the use of the Internet by non-medical individuals seeking information and more significantly making and delivering medical treatments to themselves after some Internet searches.

In one startling example, a woman had self-diagnosed chronic fatigue syndrome after reading about it on the Internet. She then started self-medicating with oral steroids that she was able to purchase over the Internet and not prescribed by her physician. She developed cataracts and glaucoma in both eyes as a result of the steroid use.

Clearly, self-diagnosis and self-medication are risky and are NOT recommended by COPN.

Dr. Shapiro shared the following recommendations from the U.S. Food & Drug Administration in her November 7 article:

Ask yourself,

Who runs the website and are they reputable? You can find this under the "About Us" section on the site.

What is the purpose of the website? Is it information or is it selling products and/or raising funds?

- Remember, anything that seems too good to be true probably is.

The information provided should be evidence-based and current. This means reliable websites need to be frequently reviewed and updated.

Examine links to other websites and be sure they are reputable as well. How accurate is the information being shared? And is your privacy being protected.

Pay attention to the suffixes (endings) of the website names.

For instance, websites that are sponsored by the U.S. government end with ".gov".

Universities use ".edu"

Not-for-profits use ".org"

Health Canada's website is www.hc-sc.gc.ca

While COPN and Osteoporosis Canada (along with Dr Shapiro) recognise that the web can be a valuable tool to gather information, remember to ALWAYS discuss your health issues with your physician. It is important for you to receive knowledgeable information and advice from a professional who is trained to assess your needs and who is also aware of related issues (such as pharmaceutical and/or metabolic interactions) that may not be readily understood from a website or printed material.

Now after all this good advice from Dr. Shapiro and from the Food & Drug Administration, COPN recognizes that the WebPages within the Osteoporosis Canada website probably needs an update. We would acknowledge that some of the information is a little 'stale'. But we have an opportunity to ask for your input with ideas or suggestions about how we can make it more useful for you.

It sounds like another survey, but really it is a call for your opinion about the pages found here: <http://www.osteoporosis.ca/english/patientnetwork/default.asp?s=1>

Please let us know before January 3, 2007. We need to assess the ideas and then select our priorities and put the plan into action to improve and revitalize our WebPages. Your input is appreciated.

FUNNY BONE: You heard about the international conference on the elephant?

The Italians presented a paper titled "The Love Life of the Elephant".
The French presented a paper called "The Gastronomy of the Elephant".
The Canadians presented a book-length study, "The Elephant: Federal or Provincial Responsibility?".

December 22, 2006

In the bleak mid-winter
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone:
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid winter,
Long ago.

Christina Rossetti

The Winter Solstice has just passed, and it isn't so bleak after all. The daylight is beginning to last a little longer each day in the Northern Hemisphere. This also means that, for many, Christmas and New Year celebrations and holidays are the centre of focus for the next couple of weeks.

Make sure you continue to Live Well With Osteoporosis.

Enjoy yourself this holiday season. Just remember: "Eat your vegetables." Be certain to continue with a balanced diet and include plenty of calcium-rich foods such as milk and yogurt especially, along with cheese, fortified orange juice, soy beverages, broccoli, almonds, sardines and salmon (with bones).

If you are on a program of vitamins, supplements or prescription drugs don't forget to continue to take your prescribed dosage. There are no holidays for this. For us "northerners", getting enough Vitamin D in particular is important. The sun won't do the trick this time of year.

Inside, be aware of obstacles and potential tripping hazards. More people visiting may mean more loose items on the floor such as shoes, purses, books, and so on. And if younger children are visiting, be aware of toys, mittens, coats, sweaters, scarves, hats and anything else that isn't attached. Whatever it is it certainly will find its way underfoot.

Outside, depending on where you find yourself, wet or icy surfaces are slippery and can cause a fall. Tread carefully and use handrails when ever ascending and descending stairs no matter how few steps. Be certain you are wearing appropriate footwear that maybe even has treads or studs to provide extra traction on slippery surfaces.

Above all, have a happy and prosperous New Year.

Please note: COPN and the Osteoporosis Canada offices will be closed until Tuesday January 2, 2007.