

COPING
'A newsletter from COPN'
September 3, 2010
Remember: You can live well with
osteoporosis!

If you have received this newsletter from the Canadian Osteoporosis Patient Network (COPN)
You are a COPN member

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Thought for Today - *Live now. Make now always the most precious time. Now will never come again.*

It is a pleasure to welcome you all back to COPING after our summer break. This first edition of the fall kicks off a busy season for COPN and Osteoporosis Canada (OC). In the coming months you will be reading about OC's top priority – preventing the next fracture for those who are at highest risk. You will also be reading more about two important initiatives that will help us address that top priority: the Osteoporosis Patient Bill of Rights and the soon-to-be released new 2010 Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Osteoporosis in Canada.

This summer we passed a significant milestone at COPN. There are now more than 3000 of us across Canada. We have tripled in size in just one year! And while we can be proud of that number, it is but a drop in the bucket when we

consider that as many as two million Canadians have osteoporosis. So I would encourage you to continue to spread the word – let's triple our number again by this time next year. All it will take is for each of us to encourage just two friends to join COPN and take advantage of the support and services that we collectively provide.

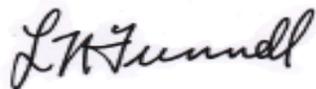
One of the questions I get asked when I encourage someone to join is "Is membership to COPN truly free?" The answer is, "Well, there is no fee for COPN membership, and we have no plans to change that, but the costs are quite extensive to Osteoporosis Canada to produce the newsletter and to support the other services that COPN provides to its members. And as a charitable organization Osteoporosis Canada relies on donations from individuals and corporations." When others ask how they can support COPN, I tell them there are several ways. Some prefer to give of their time and become volunteers. For instance, this newsletter is researched, written and edited by a team of volunteers including patients, physicians and other experts. Still others prefer to support COPN and OC through one-time donations, monthly giving or donations in memory of someone special. If you are interested in how you can make a difference you can call 1-800-463-6842. You can also visit our website at osteoporosis.ca/volunteer or osteoporosis.ca/donate for more details.

This edition of the newsletter also marks the beginning of an evolution in the look and feel of the newsletter. We recognize that many of our on-line members still do not have access to high-speed internet so we will continue to provide the e-version of the newsletter in a streamlined format to make it quicker to download. Within that context we will look at ways to make the newsletter more functional and able to take advantage of the tools and applications the e-world has to offer.

COPING is about us, and it is for us - the patients. Its purpose is to inform, to educate, to raise awareness and to support through a sharing of experiences. I am always fascinated to hear how others have managed to not only persevere but to live well with osteoporosis. Ina Ilse's story in this newsletter is one that has truly inspired me, as I am sure it will you. One of COPN's original founders, Ina recounts her recent experience with a fracture in a story that will serve as a wake-up call for us all.

As always, we welcome questions or comments on any of the stories published in COPING.

I look forward to hearing from you.



Larry Funnell
Chair
Canadian Osteoporosis Patient Network

March 03, 2010, the day my life was turned upside down

My name is Ina and I am presently recovering from my second wrist fracture.

I hope that my story will help others understand the seriousness of osteoporosis and the consequences of an osteoporotic fracture, and what they can do to make sure they don't suffer the same fate as me.

I was diagnosed with osteoporosis in 1994 after having numerous rib fractures. My fractures were very spontaneous. A hug, opening a heavy door or picking up my little dog, a Yorkie was all it took to crack a rib. This went on for several years before I finally consulted my doctor. He sent me to an endocrinologist who diagnosed me with severe osteoporosis.

I was put on an osteoporosis medication and did well enough that I had no more fractures for more than ten years.

Unfortunately when one is enjoying good health, one becomes careless, as I did, because my next fracture was totally preventable. After cleaning the snow off the driveway I rushed to get back inside. However, I was wearing a pair of shoes that were at least two sizes too large and the laces were not tied. When I got to a mound of ice (which I knew about) right next to my front steps, my feet went out from under me. I landed on my arm and snapped the radius into two.

The pain I had to endure while waiting in the local Emergency Department was nothing compared to the pain I felt four days later, when I had a rod and seven screws surgically placed into my arm. After I recovered from this I vowed that I would never be so careless again! That was five years ago.

On March 3rd, 2010 I took my little dog for a stroll. It was a lovely warm and sunny day, so I wore smooth soled shoes because I thought that there would be no snow or ice on the ground. As we walked up a slope I was slipping a bit .I should have heeded this warning and turned back, but I thought that I could handle it, and continued up the slope. When I got to the top, I looked back down realized what I was doing!

I started down, walking in part on all four backwards until I felt more safe, but I was not home free yet, a few more steps and my feet suddenly flew out from under me and I landed flat on my back on solid ice. My arms flew open like a pair of wings and when my left arm hit the ground, it was like a gun shot. I sat down on the curb and looked at my "S" shaped arm and cursed but this accident was totally preventable, if only I had not taken any chances!

The experience that followed over the next few weeks was pure hell! No amount of pain killers could relieve any of my pain. Two weeks after this fracture I had pins surgically put in to hold the bones in position for a total of seven weeks. My treatment by the medical staff was fantastic, but the pain was horrendous. All movements caused excruciating pain. After I washed I had to sit flat on the

bathroom floor to dress (it was the only way I could manage to dress). I was exhausted and the everlasting pain was a nightmare which I wished to be just that...a nightmare! For the simplest of tasks, I had to give myself lots of time. I could only sleep at night if I was very heavily sedated and that made me feel sick the next day. I could not find a comfortable position for my arm and I tried many things to distract myself from the pain, but I could focus on nothing else.

Not only did I have to endure unbearable pain, but I also lost my freedom, I could go nowhere unless someone else did the driving for me and when I did go out, I could not wait to get back home to hide with my pain! I felt very discouraged, but I kept reminding myself that this fracture was totally preventable had I only been careful and paid attention to the warning signs.

I usually am very careful at home not to have items on the floor that would cause anyone to trip or fall, and I don't climb up on any furniture to reach high places, but that is not enough. Now, when I go outside in the winter, I will wear low rubber-soled well fitting boots with good treads that will keep me firmly on the ground. If there is any ice or snow on the ground I will only go out if absolutely necessary. The same rules will apply if there are wet leaves on the ground as they are very slippery also. Even during the summer, I will think twice before walking up a hill unless I am wearing good quality shoes with good soles; and if I am unsure about a surface I am walking on, if it's too bumpy or just doesn't look right, I will just not go there!

It is now some time since I fractured my arm and although I have not yet completely recovered, I am hopeful that by next spring I will be doing gardening, carpentry and playing my guitar - all the things that I took for granted before this fracture. As horrible as this experience was for me, and as much as I blame my carelessness for it, I consider myself lucky because when I fell, I could have broken my hip and/or my back, and then where would I be?

I hope that by telling you my story, I have helped you understand that osteoporosis can be devastating when you have a fracture. We can live well with osteoporosis as long as we are sensible about what we do.

I wish you all a fracture-free life even if you are living with osteoporosis.

Some other tips:

- 1) If you have osteoporosis, tell your children to ask their doctor about getting themselves checked for osteoporosis risk factors when they reach age 50 (if they are over 50 and haven't been assessed for osteoporosis, they are overdue for that visit with their doctor).*
- 2) Your bone mineral density test does not have to show osteoporosis for you to be at high risk for getting a fracture. If you are elderly, or have other risk factors, you can still fracture easily when you fall. Ask your doctor to calculate your fracture risk.*

I wish you all a fracture-free life even if you are living with osteoporosis.

Ina Ilse

Funny bone – *I hope life isn't a joke, because I don't get it.*

Notices/references

- i. Remember: It is important for you to eat a healthy diet, get some appropriate exercise, take your calcium and vitamin D and if your doctor has prescribed a medication don't forget to take it as directed.

 - ii. COPING Weekly will come to you every second Friday. We hope you enjoy it and find the information useful. Don't forget to log on to www.osteoporosis.ca for up-to-date information.

 - iii. The material contained in this newsletter is provided for general information only. It should not be relied on to suggest a course of treatment for a particular individual or as a substitute for consultation with qualified health professionals who are familiar with your individual medical needs. Should you have any health care related questions or concerns, you should contact your physician. You should never disregard medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this or any newsletter.

 - iv. To have your name removed from the COPN mailing list please contact us at the email below.
You must provide the first and last name for which you registered in order to be removed from this list.
<cPatientNetwork@osteoporosis.ca>
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v. (1)<http://www.volunteerkw.ca/index.php?MenuItemID=180>