

COPING

September 28, 2012

Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

In this issue

- Self-Management of Chronic Conditions
- A Recipe from our Sponsor
- Funny Bone
- Fracture Fact

Event calendar

Break Through:
Osteoporosis Prevention & Management
Fergus, ON
10-Sep-2012

Lunch and Learn
Flesherton, Ontario
01-Oct-2012

Bones Night Out
"Osteoporosis: Trick or Treat?"
Stouffville, Ontario
18-Oct-2012

Osteoporosis Beyond the Headlines
Edmonton, Alberta
22-Oct-2012

Osteoporosis Update and Question Period
Hamilton, Ontario
24-Oct-2012

Break Through:
Osteoporosis Prevention & Management
Fergus, ON
29-Oct-2012

FREE Public Forum - "Standing Tall to Osteoporosis"
Peterborough, ON
07-Nov-2012

Bones n Beer
Richmond, BC
14-Nov-2012

Traditional Chinese Medicine and Your Bone Health
Hamilton, Ontario
21-Nov-2012

Self-Management of Chronic Conditions: Are you the driver or the passenger?

Meet Norma

Some COPING readers may have been introduced to Norma Pett through Osteoporosis Canada's website personal [stories page](#). Norma's regular regimen includes yoga classes, a weekly visit to the gym, spending time with her seven grandchildren and attending a course in **Living & Learning in Retirement**. Thus, it's a wonder that she has a spare moment at all to think about her osteoporosis. But the Toronto resident doesn't just think about it, she devotes much of her spare time to supporting others with the disease.

Diagnosed with "thinning bones" in 1989, when osteoporosis was not yet a widely recognized disease, Norma pressed her doctor to arrange a bone mineral density (BMD) test for her at one of only two machines available in Canada at the time. Since then, she has continued to expand her awareness of osteoporosis: keeping up to date with the latest research and therapies, and sharing this with others. Norma is a long-time volunteer at Osteoporosis Canada's national office, where she helps with accounting tasks and occasionally welcomes visitors at the reception desk. With her variety of interests and activities, she proves that a full, active life is possible in spite of being diagnosed with osteoporosis.

Being an active self-manager

What you may or may not have noticed by now is that Norma is also a self-manager. Even though Norma lives with osteoporosis (a chronic condition) she effectively manages her health and daily activities. By communicating with her health care professionals, making personal treatment decisions, staying active and exercising, Norma has taken responsibility in achieving her own best health. She is not being driven by osteoporosis on an unknown road, but rather she is the driver on a familiar path to achieve her best health.

By definition, self-management is the active participation of individuals in achieving their own best health and wellness. This involves gaining confidence, knowledge and skills to manage *physical, social and emotional* aspects of life, in partnership with health care teams and community supports (*Ontario Diabetes Strategy, Ministry of Health Self-Management working group, 2010*).

You may be asking yourself right now why the individual's role in managing osteoporosis is so central. Our health care professionals have had all those years of formal training and many of us are only just learning about our chronic conditions. Well, for one, our health care providers are present for only a small

fraction of our lives, meaning that visits with your family doctor, specialist appointments and contact with other health care professionals only add up to a few hours of your time each month or each year. What that translates to is: much of the time, you are on your own, my friend! On a day to day basis you are the one handling your osteoporosis whether actively or passively – whether effectively or ineffectively. Current evidence suggests that people with chronic diseases who are able to self-manage their conditions are likely to have fewer disease-related complications, experience greater quality of life and better overall health and use health care services more appropriately than those who do not self-manage.

Like Norma, both Larry and Colm faced a variety of emotions and lifestyle changes upon being diagnosed with osteoporosis. Their stories are also featured on the Osteoporosis Canada (www.osteoporosis.ca) website. Click [here](#) to view. Larry, the current Chair of COPN, was diagnosed with osteoporosis when he was just 48 years old, shortly after moving to Vancouver from Ottawa. He recounts his experiences with the disease: "I was shocked when my doctor told me I had osteoporosis. Like many others, I didn't think that the disease affected men. As a man, I felt isolated by osteoporosis."

Similarly Colm, an active Triathlon athlete, expresses his thoughts about the disease: "There are many myths surrounding this disease such as 'Osteoporosis is a woman's disease.' Another myth is that it's an old person's disease and there's nothing one can do. NOT TRUE. After my diagnosis, I changed my diet to include more calcium-rich foods and added Vitamin D supplements to my routine."

Finding out you have a chronic disease can be very overwhelming and can cause many difficult emotions such as fear, anxiety, and, as Larry mentioned, isolation. Often times, these emotions, if not dealt with, can lead to depression and physical symptoms like tense muscles, shortness of breath and pain. These symptoms can feed off one another and cause the disease to worsen over time. This is why it is so important to care for yourself and your chronic condition and make appropriate lifestyle changes so that it does not lead you on a downward spiral. In Colm's case, after being diagnosed with

osteoporosis, he did not let the feelings of hopelessness set in but rather altered his diet and began taking vitamin D supplements. Small ripples do make big waves!

For all those readers who have read this far, congratulations on your existing self-management skills! By taking the time to register as a COPN member and read the COPING newsletter you demonstrate that you are seeking information that will help you handle your osteoporosis and that's a great accomplishment. I'm sure this is just one of the things you are doing to cope with your conditions. There are many tools and strategies involved in caring for yourself and your conditions. Breaking down the tasks and topics involved helps to simplify the puzzle. These include managing your medications, managing pain, eating right, physical activity, understanding your emotions and communicating with family, friends and health care professionals, to name a few.

Learning about chronic condition self-management can be easy to do. Taking a self-management workshop, for example, is a great way to help you learn the skills and tools necessary to actively participate in your own health and wellness and conquer your osteoporosis. The "Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions" workshop helps people to develop new skills to manage the symptoms and problems that result from chronic conditions. These skills – called "self-management skills" - help people to better manage pain and fatigue, to reduce stress, to communicate better with their doctors and their families and to eat and be active in ways that improve their health and overall well-being. Workshops are taught over a series of 6 weeks for 2.5 hours per week by two Peer Leaders who often have chronic conditions themselves. The "Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions" workshop, developed over many years at Stanford University in the United States, is considered best practice in chronic disease self-management and has been adopted in many parts of Canada and around the world. Self-management workshops are currently being offered in many communities across Canada.

We would encourage anyone living with osteoporosis to check out the self-management workshop! To get more information on self-management workshops in your area ask

your health care provider or click [here](#). Like Norma, Larry and Colm, you too can feel better, take charge of your health and live life to the fullest, enjoying the activities you choose and spending quality time with family and friends. So ask yourself, are you going to be the passenger or the driver? Make the call and get involved in the “Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions” workshops in your area.

Amanda Vasquez
Coordinator, CE LHIN Self-Management Program - Ontario

A Recipe from Our Sponsor – Greek Pasta Salad

Pasta salad takes a trip to the Mediterranean with lemon, oregano and the zip of feta in this creamy yet light dressing.
Course: Salads Prep. Time: 20 mins Cooking Time: 8 mins Yields: 6 to 8 servings

1 milk product serving(s) per person

Preparation

Dressing:

1 1/4 cups (310 ml) **Milk**
1 cup (250 ml) crumbled **Canadian Feta cheese**, (about 4 oz / 125 g)
2 cloves garlic, thinly chopped
1 tbsp (15 ml) dried oregano
1 tsp (5 ml) grated lemon rind
1/2 tsp (2 ml) salt
1/4 cup (60 ml) fresh lemon juice
2 tbsp (30 ml) red or white wine vinegar

Pasta Salad:

12 oz (375 g) small shells or other small pasta, (about 4 cups /1 L)
1/2 English cucumber, diced
2 cups (500 ml) grape or cherry tomatoes, halved
1/2 cup (125 ml) diced red onion
Salt and pepper, to taste
1/2 cup (125 ml) crumbled **Canadian Feta cheese**
Black olives, (optional)
Fresh oregano for garnish, (optional)



For more information about this recipe:

<http://www.dairygoodness.ca/getenough/recipes/greek-pasta-salad2>

Tips: If making salad ahead, toss pasta with half of dressing and keep remaining dressing separate. Cover and refrigerate salad and dressing for up to 1 day. Toss with remaining dressing just before serving.

Instructions: Dressing

In blender or food processor, blend **milk**, **Feta cheese**, garlic, oregano, lemon rind and salt until smooth. With motor running, drizzle lemon juice and vinegar through hole in lid or feed tube until blended. Transfer to large bowl; let stand for 10 min or until thickened.

Salad

In large pot of boiling salted water, cook pasta for about 8 min or until tender but firm; drain. Rinse under cold running water until cool; drain well. Add to dressing in bowl with cucumber, tomatoes and onion; toss to combine. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve sprinkled with crumbled **Feta**. Garnish with olives and oregano (if using).

FUNNY BONE: Birthdays are good for you; the more you have, the longer you live.

FRACTURE FACT: Women and men alike begin to lose bone in their mid-30s; as they approach menopause, women lose bone at a greater rate, from 2-3 per cent per year.

This issue of COPING is sponsored by Dairy Farmers of Canada



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