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It Could Be You: Have You Been Screened for Osteoporosis?

Susan Crosby, former President of Women in Government, shares her osteoporosis-screening story. The circumstances of Susan's story are unique, but the end result is not; As Dr. Claude Arnaud explains, a shocking majority of Americans living with osteoporosis have never been screened or treated for the disease.

Oakland, CA, April 8, 2011—Susan Crosby couldn't believe her ears when doctors first told her she had osteopenia, the early stage of bone loss that can lead to osteoporosis. "Here I am, a Legislator with access to some of the best healthcare in the state, and I didn't know I was at risk for osteoporosis!" says Susan, "What about the average woman on the street?"

Susan had never expected to find herself so caught off-guard about healthcare. After all, she had received many awards and honors for helping to improve healthcare services in Indiana during her 12 years in the state's House of Representatives. But when it came to her own bone health, Susan was like most American women: she had never been screened for osteoporosis.

"The medical community at large knows only 30% of all U.S residents with osteoporosis and the consequent high risk of debilitating fracture," explains Dr. Claude Arnaud, president of American Bone Health's Medical and Scientific Advisory Board. "While these patients are screened for bone loss and given the opportunity to be treated, the remaining 70% with osteoporosis are currently living with the daunting threat of fractures that could lead to long-term disability, or even death."

This regrettable record of medical care is hard to understand, because the solution seems simple enough: All women over 65 and all men over 70 should be screened for osteoporosis with the nearest DXA machine. People in these age groups are the most likely to have osteoporosis and, fortunately, they are offered free screening through Medicare.

Susan's screening story is unique, but the end result was not. She was attending a regional meeting for Women in Government, a non-profit organization that works to empower and mobilize female state legislators. Because osteoporosis treatment was one of the topics of the conference, a machine was there for legislators to experience the bone density scanning procedure for themselves.

“A speaker at the conference told us that most likely one out of three women would have osteoporosis or osteopenia,” says Susan. “I looked at my two colleagues from Indiana that were sitting with me and thought, which one of them will it be?”

When both of her colleagues tested negative for the bone diseases, Susan’s concern quickly disappeared. To her surprise, however, Susan’s own scan revealed bone density in the osteopenia range. “I knew right then that I had to do something to raise awareness about osteoporosis,” says Susan.

Because Susan took the opportunity to get screened, she has since been able to strengthen her bones and has avoided fracture to this day. As recommended by her doctor, Susan now exercises regularly and takes a calcium supplement to help her bones stay healthy. She’s one of the lucky ones.

American Bone Health strongly encourages you to speak to your doctor about getting a bone density screening if you are a woman over 65 or a man over 70. This screening is a free Medicare benefit and it could prevent a life-altering hip fracture. Osteoporosis is a preventable and treatable disease, but it will continue to ruin lives until more people realize the necessity of getting screened.

About American Bone Health

The mission of American Bone Health is to mobilize communities with timely bone health information that supports strong and healthy bones and prevents osteoporosis and fractures. Established by the Foundation for Osteoporosis Research and Education (FORE) as a community-based, chapter-driven, health organization, American Bone Health builds capacity for local community outreach through technical support, programs and public awareness campaigns. We engage public advocates for osteoporosis prevention, detection and treatment. We invite you to find out more about us at americanbonehealth.org