NEARLY EVERYONE has an older family member who has fallen and broken a hip. Most often it’s a woman older than 65, but men can also have a fracture that’s related to weak bones. It’s not unusual, as more than 10 million people in the United States have osteoporosis and another 34 million are at high risk for the disease. Each year, nearly 1.5 million adults have fractures, which are a direct result of the condition, making it one of the most common diseases affecting older adults.

Osteoporosis is a chronic condition that occurs when there is a depletion of bone calcium and protein. The results are loss of bone mass, increased bone fragility and increased risk of fracture. Nearly 80 percent of those affected by the disease are women; however, men are also at risk for developing the condition. The only way to accurately diagnose osteoporosis is with a bone mineral density test.

Osteoporosis is normally not detected until a patient has what is called a fragility fracture. These fractures can be debilitating and may even result in death. The statistics are startling, as about 25 percent of patients older than 50 who break a hip die within the year.

For most, bone loss is similar to hypertension, as it is a “silent disease.” Patients don’t know that they have had significant bone loss until their bones become so weak that a small bump or fall causes a fracture or a vertebra to collapse.

The good news is that there are excellent drug treatments available that can slow the process of bone loss and potentially reverse it. We can greatly improve the quality of life and decrease mortality if bone loss is diagnosed before a fracture occurs. Most importantly, people need to undergo a bone density test to see if they need drug therapy.

BONE DENSITY TESTING — DXA IS THE GOLD STANDARD

Different types of machines measure bone density, but dual energy X-ray absorptionmetry, or DXA, is considered the best by the International Society of Clinical Densitometry, a multidisciplinary international society of physicians — including radiologists, obstetricians, gynecologists and endocrinologists. DXA scans to measure the spine, hip and total body. Computer-generated images of various skeletal sites yield precise bone density measurements that are unmatched by other screening equipment. The pain-
Dr. Melamed, a fellowship trained musculoskeletal radiologist and certified clinical densitometrist, is chief of DXA imaging at Wake Radiology Diagnostic Imaging. Wake Radiology has one of the largest and most advanced DXA programs in the Southeast, offering testing at seven sites, including Garner. For more information, visit the Web site at www.wakeradiology.com.

WHEN SHOULD YOU HAVE A BONE DENSITY SCAN?

The ISCD has developed screening guidelines, which include:
- All women older than 65.
- All men older than 70.
- Anyone with a fragility fracture.
- Anyone with a disease, condition or medication associated with osteoporosis.
- Anyone who is considering therapy for osteoporosis, if bone density testing would facilitate the decision.
- Women who have taken hormone replacement therapy for an extended time.
- Anyone who is undergoing treatment for osteoporosis, to monitor the effects of the therapy.

Osteoporosis is a prevalent disease that greatly affects the quality of life for many older adults in the United States. In the past, there wasn’t much need for testing as nothing could be done to rebuild bone mass. Now, we have excellent drug therapies that can actually strengthen and rebuild bone density. Unfortunately, the condition is underdiagnosed, as we are not scanning people when it is indicated. The need for testing is going to grow as the population ages, and even older adults will be at risk for the disease.

An anti-aging presentation about menopause & andropause (the male form of menopause) and the role custom hormone replacement therapy has in alleviating many of the undesirable effects.

Presenters: Dr. Lewis Stocks & Tom Jones, Compounding Pharmacist

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