



Bone health

At the end of February 2023, the official website of the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that an agreement had been signed to develop a strategic action plan on bone health and aging and to promote a public health strategy between the WHO and the European Society for the Clinical and Economic Aspects of Osteoporosis, Osteoarthritis and Musculoskeletal Diseases (ESCEO). The primary goal of the action was clearly defined: fracture prevention in older adults. Such agreements are indeed necessary, because bone health issues remain insufficiently addressed, and coordinated action is needed to prevent fractures in older adults. Low-energy fractures, which can cause disability, numerous complications, and increased mortality, particularly in the elderly, pose a significant challenge to healthcare systems globally. Only about 6% of patients hospitalized after falls in orthopedic wards are referred to specialists who can assess bone health and initiate interventions to prevent further falls and fractures.

The agreement between the ESCEO and the WHO includes the development of a public health strategy and action plan to prevent fractures among older adults and improve the reach of fracture-related medical services. Developing such a strategy at both the global and local levels seems imperative, especially given the aging of our populations.

According to the WHO, after signing the agreement, the following actions are planned: developing estimates of fractures and osteoporosis; reviewing evidence-based interventions for fracture prevention; and developing an economic model for investments in fracture prevention and care. As a consequence of these actions, there is a plan to provide countries with guidance on strengthening national health information systems by integrating osteoporosis and fractures into routine data monitoring; and guidance on how to use them to design policies and programs to reduce the risk of fractures in older adults. The International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF) and the WHO Collaborating Centre for the Epidemiology of Musculoskeletal Health and Aging at the University of Liège have been appointed technical partners for osteoporosis and musculoskeletal aging by the WHO.

Although the agreement focuses on the elderly population, I would like to draw attention to the younger population, even extending to children. Reduced physical activity, poor nutrition, and the use of various stimulants affect bone health, and in children and adolescents, they can significantly contribute to failure to achieve appropriate bone mass for age. As environmental factors unfavorable to bone turnover continue to increase, a growing number of elderly people may be at risk of fractures in the future.

Source: New collaboration targets better bone health and ageing. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news/item/23-02-2023-new-collaboration-targets-better-bone-health-and-ageing>

Maria Maślińska
Editor-in-Chief