

Broken bones - Broken lives

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With the rapid ageing of the population, preserving the healthy mobility and independence of seniors is becoming an urgent priority. Nevertheless, osteoporosis, a disease which causes bones to become weak and fragile, and a major cause of disability, loss of quality of life and early death in the senior population, remains largely neglected.

In an effort to convince health authorities to take the necessary action for prevention, the International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF) has published a [new report](#) [1] looking at the burden and management of fragility fractures due to osteoporosis in six major European countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, UK).

The report, "Broken bones, broken lives: A roadmap to solve the fragility fracture crisis in Europe," (with country-specific editions), provides new evidence that the clinical, societal and cost burdens associated with fragility fractures in Europe are a growing public health concern requiring urgent action.

The report reveals that:

- Fragility fracture costs exceed those of many other chronic diseases (e.g. chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), rheumatoid arthritis, hypertension).
- Fragility fractures can result in significant impairment, often making daily activities such as eating, dressing or washing difficult. One year after hip fracture, 40% of patients are still unable to walk independently.
- With an estimated 2.68 million new broken bones every year in these six EU countries alone, fragility fractures impact on the independence and quality of life of 20 million women and men living with osteoporosis.
- There is an enormous osteoporosis treatment gap following fracture (which ranges from 60-85% in women).

Given the immense human and socioeconomic costs, IOF calls on healthcare authorities to act. A key step would be the implementation of Fracture Liaison Services (FLS) in clinics that treat fractures. Still all too rare, such coordinated care models represent a proven, cost-effective way to improve patient outcomes and reduce the cost burden to healthcare systems.

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