



Advancing consumer health through responsible self-care

MEDIA STATEMENT

SMI says osteoporosis prevalence statistics highlight importance of calcium and vitamin D for bone health

5 September 2014 – The New Zealand Self Medication Industry (SMI) said a new Australian report highlighting the importance of preventing osteoporosis is a warning for New Zealand as well.

In its report, *Estimating the Prevalence of Osteoporosis in Australia*,¹ the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) said that the prevalence of osteoporosis may actually be much higher than previously thought.

The AIHW report said that it is difficult to accurately estimate the true prevalence of osteoporosis in the community because it has no obvious symptoms and many cases are not diagnosed until a minimal trauma fracture occurs. While several epidemiological studies have attempted to provide definitive prevalence estimates of osteoporosis in Australia, estimates vary according to the methodology of the study and a variety of other factors.

A recent study measuring bone density in a population sample, showed the prevalence of osteoporosis among people aged 50 and over was estimated to be 23% for women and 6% for men, according to the AIHW report.

The report also says osteoporosis is a significant health factor affecting the care needs of 12% of people in permanent residential aged care, although this is likely to be an underestimate. This estimate includes both diagnosed and undiagnosed cases of osteoporosis.²

Osteoporosis New Zealand estimates the condition affects one in every two women over the age of 60 and nearly one third of all men in New Zealand.

SMI executive director, Tim Roper says osteoporosis is one of New Zealand's most debilitating and costly health problems.

"Because fracture risk increases with age, postmenopausal women and older individuals need to maintain good bone health through appropriate levels of physical activity and adequate calcium intake and vitamin D levels. For people who aren't obtaining adequate calcium or vitamin D from natural sources, supplementation is known to be a highly effective way to fill the gap."

Tim Roper, SMI executive director said: "Osteoporosis is a disease in which the density and quality of bone are reduced, leading to weakness of the skeleton. The condition increases

the risk of fracture, particularly at the hip, spine and wrist. With a growing number of New Zealanders reaching retirement age, osteoporosis is expected to grow in prevalence.³

"Calcium is an essential mineral that is stored in the bones of the human body. It is not only required for the normal development and maintenance of the skeleton, but also to ensure optimal operation of neuromuscular and cardiac functions.⁵

"While the required intake of calcium is typically met through the consumption of calcium rich foods such as dairy products, nuts and fish, the absorption and metabolism of this mineral is dependent on vitamin D. Sufficient vitamin D intake is particularly important in low light conditions, as the body's ability to synthesise the compound is dependent on exposure to ultraviolet light.

"New Zealanders who are unsure about their calcium and vitamin D intake are encouraged to talk to a qualified healthcare professional who can provide advice on ways to monitor and if needed, increase their calcium and vitamin D levels," said Mr Roper.

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References

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About SMI: The New Zealand Self-Medication Industry Association Inc (SMI) is the national trade association representing manufacturers, marketers and distributors of a wide range of products, generally available "over-the-counter" (OTC) and mainly for use in self-medication by New Zealand consumers. SMI's mission is to promote better health through responsible self-care. This means ensuring that safe and effective self-care products are readily available to all New Zealanders at a reasonable cost. SMI works to encourage responsible use by consumers and an increasing role for cost-effective self-medication products as part of the broad national health strategy.

Media contacts: Tim Roper, Executive Director NZSMI Tel 09 235 5260 Mobile 021 992 113 or Brenda Saunders, 021 777 171.

New Zealand Self-Medication Industry Association Inc.
PO Box 6473, Auckland, New Zealand Phone/Fax (09) 235 5260
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