

## **European Parliament Osteoporosis Interest Group Meeting Strasbourg Parliament, October 24, 2007**

In the European Union, someone has a fracture as a result of osteoporosis every 30 seconds.

This shocking fact began a presentation to members of the EP Osteoporosis Interest Group on Wednesday, October 24, 2007 at the Strasbourg Parliament.

This informal, all-party group of MEPs was founded in 2001, and has continued to work with the IOF as well as policy and scientific experts on the EU Consultation Panel to increase political awareness about osteoporosis and to stimulate policy developments.

Mary Honeyball, MEP UK, co-chair of the Interest Group, welcomed members and MEP colleagues while emphasizing the need to continue the positive work that has been accomplished. "Osteoporosis affects 1 in 3 postmenopausal women and 1 in 5 men over the age of 50. As our population ages, these numbers will increase, and it is our responsibility to develop specific actions that can be taken by national health ministries to reduce the enormous cost of fractures in Europe"

One way to confront the rising burden of health care costs related to osteoporotic fractures in Europe is to better understand the scope of the problem. Professor Juliet Compston, Chair of the EU Osteoporosis Consultation Panel and Professor of Bone Medicine at the University of Cambridge School of Clinical Medicine, introduced her presentation with a review of osteoporosis, incidence of fractures, and the often devastating consequences associated with them. Despite proven and available therapies, studies indicate that only 1 in 5 women with fractures received treatment. "The burden of hospital costs of osteoporotic fractures approaches the overall cost of stroke, and exceeds those of myocardial infarction, breast and prostate cancers. And the life time risk for women dying from complications of a hip fracture equals the risk of dying from breast cancer"

Understanding the current status of osteoporosis incidence and management in Europe will be furthered with the upcoming audit being prepared by members of the EU Osteoporosis Consultation Panel – comprised of scientific and policy experts from all 27 member states.

Members of the Interest Group heard how this 'snapshot' of individual European countries will tell us about the incidence of fractures, numbers and availability of bone density machines, cost of fractures, accessibility and reimbursement of proven therapies as well as health professional and public education, and research. This report will allow us to compare current management among member states and show us where care gaps continue to exist.

This report, supported by IOF and due for completion in 2008, will be a major part of global IOF policy activities acknowledging their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as well as 10<sup>th</sup>

anniversary of the Eight Recommendations drafted by the European Commission in 1998.

Peter Olajos, MEP Hungary, and vice-chair of the Interest Group, advised his MEP colleagues to continue their efforts to

- Improve availability and reimbursement of bone density scans for those at risk of osteoporosis before the first fracture
- Improve reimbursement for proven therapies for those at risk of osteoporosis before the first fracture

“Publicize your Osteoporosis Interest Group membership in meetings, constituency newsletters, personal profiles. Ensure osteoporosis is put on the agendas of parliamentary committees responsible for public health, chronic disease, research, social affairs. Work with and coordinate your activities of your Consultation Panel colleagues to further leverage advocacy efforts” were just some of Mr Olajos’ suggestions for promoting osteoporosis activities.

The meeting concluded with remarks by Angelika Niebler, MEP Germany and co-chair of the Interest Group. Mrs Niebler emphasized that only by working closely together – as MEPs, health policy makers and scientists – can we succeed in reducing the personal and financial burden of osteoporotic fractures. “It is crucial for us to ensure that osteoporosis is included in relevant UE initiatives such as health and research strategies and their related programs. I encourage you and your MEP colleagues to join in the fight against osteoporosis.”