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National Osteoporosis Foundation Responds to New England Journal of Medicine Articles Considering the Risks and Benefits of Long-Term Bisphosphonate Treatment for Osteoporosis

Foundation Urges Patients Not to Stop Treatment without Talking to their Healthcare Provider; Experts Available for Comment

Washington, D.C. May 9, 2012 – In response to the Perspectives pieces published online today by the New England Journal of Medicine, the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF), the nation’s leading community health organization dedicated to preventing osteoporosis and broken bones, commends the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for its continued analysis of long-term bisphosphonate treatment in order to help patients and healthcare providers determine the appropriate length of time for treatment.

“Members of the public and healthcare professionals alike have been looking for clear guidance about appropriate length of time to continue bisphosphonate treatment. I’m happy to see the importance of regularly monitoring patients on an individual basis to determine their need for continued therapy highlighted as a key point of both articles,” said Robert Recker, M.D., president of the National Osteoporosis Foundation. “We know that treatment plays an important role in stopping bone loss and preventing broken bones. And we also know that all patients are different and have to be monitored individually to determine the risks and benefits of continued treatment to prevent fractures. At NOF, our ultimate goal is to protect the 10 million Americans with and the 34 million at-risk of osteoporosis from broken bones; and with the number of broken bones caused by osteoporosis annually exceeding the incidence of heart attacks, stroke and breast cancer combined, the need for effective treatment to prevent fractures has never been more clear.”

Studies have found that bisphosphonates reduce the risk of a broken hip in people with osteoporosis by 50 percent or more, and also reduce the risk of other broken bones, making it clear that bisphosphonate treatment is effective in preventing fractures. The risk benefit ratio of bisphosphonate treatment favors treating patients at high risk of fracture, including those who have suffered a previous hip or spine fracture due to osteoporosis or those with a BMD score less than -2.5. NOF also recommends treatment based on meeting the FRAX guidelines of a 10-year fracture risk of three percent at the hip or 20 percent for any osteoporotic fracture.

Therefore, NOF strongly supports bisphosphonate treatment as highly effective in the right patients and urges patients not to discontinue use of these or any other osteoporosis medicines without first speaking with their healthcare professional. Deciding not to treat a patient with a bisphosphonate because of the concern for rare side effects places the patient at risk for a fracture that brings its own serious consequences like morbidity, loss of independence and mortality.
NOF advises all patients not to stop use of their bisphosphonate treatment before discussing the risks and benefits with the healthcare provider. If you’ve recently been diagnosed with osteoporosis, talk to your physician or other healthcare professional about the treatment most appropriate for your needs. And also remember that for an osteoporosis medicine to work, you need to get enough calcium and vitamin D. Eat a balanced diet that includes fruits, vegetables and calcium-rich foods and exercise regularly to build and maintain healthy bones. In addition, avoid smoking and limit your alcohol intake to no more than two drinks per day.

For more information or to schedule an interview with an NOF expert, please contact Valerie Patmintra at (202) 320-6388 or Valerie.patmintra@nof.org.

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About the National Osteoporosis Foundation
Established in 1984, the National Osteoporosis Foundation, a leading community-focused health organization, is dedicated to the prevention of osteoporosis and broken bones, the promotion of strong bones for life and the reduction of human suffering through programs of awareness, education, advocacy and research. For more information on the National Osteoporosis Foundation, visit [www.nof.org](http://www.nof.org).