CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES • OFFICE OF WOMEN'S HEALTH

CWHS

Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

OSTEOPOROSIS KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS, CALIFORNIA, 2000

CMRI (California Medical Review, Inc.)

Public Health Message:

Most women surveyed have heard of osteoporosis and know that it is the loss of bone. Many women ages 50 and older are diagnosed with osteoporosis, yet just one third of women under age 50 report talking to their doctor about osteoporosis prevention.

Osteoporosis, chacterized by thinning bones and weakened bone structure, places women at risk for bone fractures. More than eight million women in the U.S. have osteoporosis, and another 15 million are at risk for osteoporosis due to low bone mass.[1] The condition is more common among older women and women who have gone through menopause; however, osteoporosis can strike at any age. It is estimated that one of two women over age 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in her lifetime.[2] Women can help to prevent or delay osteoporosis by maintaining a healthy lifestyle that includes eating a healthy diet rich in calcium and vitamin D, exercising regularly, and taking medications such as estrogen when appropriate.

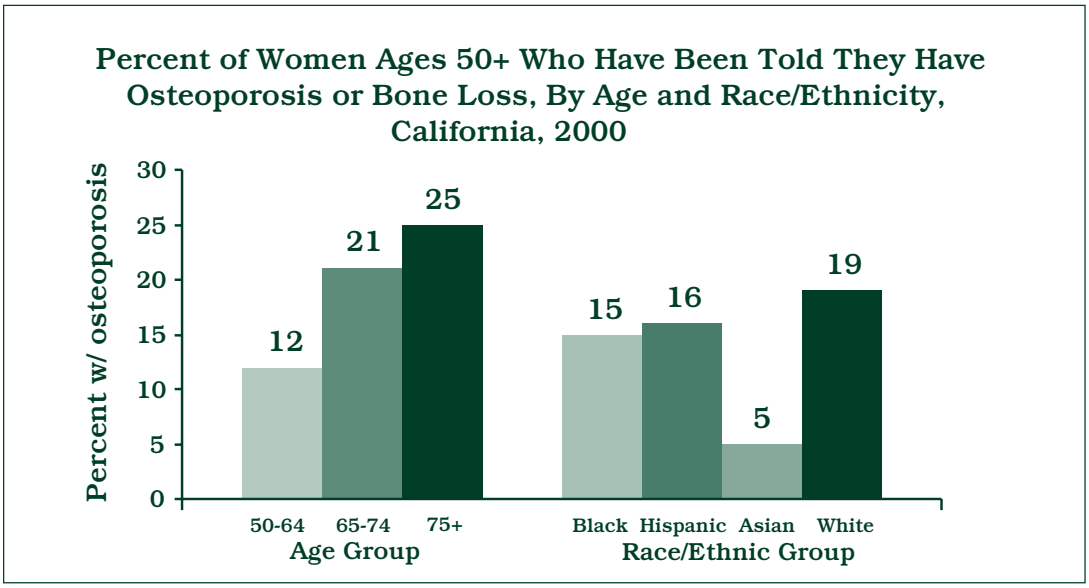
The 2000 California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) asked 4,012 women if they had ever heard of osteoporosis, what do they think it is, and whether a doctor had talked with them about preventing osteoporosis. There were 1,398 women ages 50 and older asked if they had ever been told they have osteoporosis.

Results: Overall, 92% of all women reported having heard about osteoporosis. Fewer Hispanic and Asian women (81%) had heard of osteoporosis than Black or White women (96%).

- The majority of women (90%) correctly defined osteoporosis as bone loss while fewer women defined it as joint problems (2%) or other health problems (8%). Fewer Black, Hispanic, and Asian women than White women knew what osteoporosis is (85% versus 93%).
- More women ages 45 and older than younger women reported talking with their doctor about preventing osteoporosis (57% versus 30%). White women were most likely to have talked with their doctor about osteoporosis (48%), followed by Black (33%), Asian (29%), and Hispanic (26%) women.
- Among all women ages 50 and older, women ages 75 and older were most likely and Asian women least likely to have been told they have osteoporosis (see graph).

[1] National Osteoporosis Foundation: www.nof.org/osteoporosis/stats.htm

[2] NIH Ostoporosis and Related Bone Diseases: www.osteo.org/osteofastfact.html



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