



Congress Moves To Protect Bone Health, USA

21 Nov 2007

Congress took an important step toward protecting patient access to essential osteoporosis care with the introduction of H.R. 4206 "Medicare Fracture Prevention and Osteoporosis Testing Act of 2007," sponsored by Congresswoman Shelley Berkley (D-1st-NV). The bill calls for a reversal of drastic Medicare cuts to DXA (dual energy x-ray absorptiometry), the imaging procedure accepted as the gold standard for measuring bone mass to diagnosis osteoporosis. This legislation will build on Federal initiatives already in place to improve the detection and treatment of this common and debilitating disease.

In response to the introduction of this bill, a coalition including the National Osteoporosis Foundation, the largest osteoporosis patient advocacy group in the United States; the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists; the American College of Rheumatology; The Endocrine Society; the International Society for Clinical Densitometry issued the following joint statement:

"Ten years ago, Congress recognized the importance of diagnosing and treating osteoporosis by enacting legislation that allowed for bone mass measurements in all qualified Medicare beneficiaries. It is estimated now that osteoporosis causes more than 2 million fractures yearly with costs estimated at \$18 billion. Numerous Federal initiatives to improve on the low osteoporosis diagnosis rates are now endangered because of recently enacted Medicare reimbursement cuts.

Congresswoman Berkley and the 41 co-sponsors to H.R. 4206 have recognized that DXA is an important disease prevention tool. This bill would ensure that the more than 44 million Americans affected by osteoporosis and low bone mass have access to early diagnosis and treatment to prevent debilitating fractures. A recent study by the Lewin Group revealed that restoring DXA payment rates to the 2006 level will actually save the Medicare program \$1.14 billion over five years due to reduced fractures.

We applaud Congresswoman Berkley and all of the co-sponsors and urge Congress to pass this legislation quickly to ensure that Americans have continued access to this critical health service."

About Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is characterized by fragile bones that are prone to break or fracture with minimal trauma. Because bone thinning occurs gradually over time and without symptoms until fractures occur, DXA can identify people early in the disease process so they can take the necessary precautions to prevent bone loss and subsequent fractures. While half of all women will suffer from an osteoporotic fracture in their lifetime, only 14 percent of eligible women received a DXA test in 2006. Because projected Medicare cuts in the office setting drop DXA reimbursement by 75 percent below operating cost, 93 percent of physicians have indicated that they will abandon DXA testing by 2010. By the end of this year, more than one-third of all in-office DXA sites will have closed, according to a recent study performed by medical societies that comprise the osteoporosis care infrastructure.

[American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists](#)

Article URL: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/89444.php>

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