

[IMAGE]

Fractures and Medication Use: A Vicious Cycle

By Editorial Staff

Older patients at risk for fragility fractures (including one of the most debilitating and dangerous, a hip fracture) often take prescription medications for other health conditions that can actually increase fracture risk by increasing the risk of a fall or reducing bone density, for example. The problem is compounded if patients continue to take risky medications after suffering a fracture.

Who would continue to take these medications after a fracture event? More than nine in 10 patients, suggests a recent study that examined the Medicare records of nearly 170,000 beneficiaries and compared them with retail pharmacy records. Among subjects, most of whom were women, average age of 80, approximately 75 percent had been taking a medication prior to their fracture that could have contributed to its occurrence. What's more, only 7 percent stopped taking the medication following their fracture, while about the same percentage started taking a similar medication also tied to fracture risk.

The moral to this story is twofold: First, if you're at risk for a fracture, make sure you ask your doctor the right questions to protect yourself, particularly if you're taking or are prescribed medications for any concurrent health issues. Second, if you've suffered a fracture, make sure you're offered alternative medications (or nondrug options) that help you heal, rather than increasing your risk of suffering a second fracture that could prove even more debilitating.

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