



Experts consider osteoporosis to be a silent epidemic which is neglected and under addressed, according to new survey released today

- **Osteoporosis is estimated to affect 200 million people worldwide¹ and results in a fracture every 3 seconds² yet a new survey reveals bone specialists in Europe think its impact is not fully recognised³**
- **Specialists (82%) believe osteoporosis is a silent epidemic, yet only 24% believe their healthcare system is adequately prepared to support osteoporosis patients³**
- **More than half (53%) of bone specialists think their patients believe that osteoporosis or fragility fractures will only impact them in the short term³, despite clear evidence of its long-term impact on quality of life and independence^{4,5}**

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM (September 20, 2019) A new European survey, released today by UCB, reveals that bone specialists believe osteoporosis and fragility fractures are neglected and under prioritized by their healthcare systems, and action needs to be taken.³ The survey, conducted in August 2019, asked 401 bone specialists from 11 European countries about their experience of osteoporosis and fragility fracture management.³

Of those surveyed, 66% agreed that osteoporosis is a neglected condition and only 10% of specialists surveyed agreed that osteoporosis and fragility fractures are currently given a high priority by their local health authority.³ When asked, the majority (90%) agreed that the condition should be a public health priority and 91% agreed that effective management can improve outcomes and reduce costs.³ At present, in women over 45 years of age, osteoporosis accounts for more days spent in hospital than many other diseases, including diabetes and breast cancer.⁶ In 2010, the cost of fragility fractures in the European Union was €37 billion⁷, and based on demographic changes is predicted to double by 2050.¹

“These results confirm what many of us already knew. Every year that goes by, more patients are potentially being denied effective management, leaving them vulnerable to life changing fractures. We need dedicated policy advisory groups to support national osteoporosis professionals and patient groups to implement effective approaches to bridge this prioritisation gap for policy makers, primary care and patients.” commented Dr Kassim Javaid, Consultant in Rheumatologist, University of Oxford. While the ultimate step is to prevent the first fracture, co-ordinated post-fracture care services like the Fracture Liaison Service (FLS) has started to close the care gap, successful FLS models need to be expanded internationally. Once these systems are in place, FLSs can evolve to identify high risk groups to prevent the first fracture, our ultimate goal.”

The survey results also suggest that patients are not well informed about osteoporosis and its impact. Only a third (33%) of specialists feel their patients understand the long term impact of osteoporosis and more than half (53%) say their patients believe there is a low, to no increased risk of subsequent fragility fractures after the first,³ despite evidence which shows that after experiencing the first fracture, you are five times more likely to suffer another fracture within a year.⁸ Worse still, for those that suffer a hip fracture, 40% are not able to walk independently again⁹ and up to a quarter of those who suffer a hip fracture die in the first year through complications.^{10,11}

In addition, the survey highlighted challenges in osteoporosis management may also sit at the primary care level. The majority (84%) of specialists agreed that increased awareness and understanding of osteoporosis is

needed for general practitioners (GPs), and only 32% agreed that GPs refer suspected osteoporosis diagnoses in a timely manner.³

With osteoporosis being the most common bone disease in the world, resulting in more than 8.9 million fragility fractures each year around the globe,¹² more needs to be done to help educate and support general practitioners and patients on osteoporosis and the importance of timely referral and effective management.

“Osteoporosis patients can face a great loss of independence and a reduced quality of life, especially after experiencing a fragility fracture and these survey results highlight that the specialists treating the condition believe that not enough is being done to ensure it’s given the priority that’s required at the healthcare system level,” said Dr. Pascale Richetta, Head of Bone and Executive Vice President at UCB. “We need to help prevent this silent epidemic from spreading by better educating policy makers, physicians and patients on the long-term impact of osteoporosis, so that the condition can be effectively managed, and the risk of subsequent, iterative, fractures reduced.”

For further information

Scott Fleming, Bone Communications Lead, UCB

T +44 7702 777378, scott.fleming@ucb.com

France Nivelles, Global Communications, UCB

T +32.2.559.9178, france.nivelles@ucb.com

Laurent Schots, Media Relations, UCB

T+32.2.559.92.64, laurent.schots@ucb.com

About the survey

UCB conducted a survey of healthcare professionals with a speciality in bone medicine. The survey was conducted in August-September 2019 as part of an initiative to investigate attitudes and perceived prioritisation of osteoporosis and fragility fractures in eleven major industrialized countries: Germany, Spain, France, United Kingdom, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland and Romania. 401 specialist healthcare professionals were interviewed online about osteoporosis and fragility fractures.

About UCB

UCB, Brussels, Belgium (www.ucb.com) is a global biopharmaceutical company focused on the discovery and development of innovative medicines and solutions to transform the lives of people living with severe diseases of the immune system or of the central nervous system. With 7 500 people in approximately 40 countries, the company generated revenue of € 4.6 billion in 2018. UCB is listed on Euronext Brussels (symbol: UCB). Follow us on Twitter: @UCB_news

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