

Underwriting

OSTEOPOROSIS



by Donald Victorson, CLU

UNDERWRITER:

Defined as someone sitting
in an ivory tower 900 miles
from here, trained to say,
"NO."

YOUR JOB:

To convince that
underwriter, with truthful
information, presented in
as favorable a light as
possible that it is desirable,
even possible to say
"YES."

Osteoporosis, or porous bone, is a disease characterized by low bone mass and structural deterioration of bone tissue, leading to bone fragility and an increased likelihood of fractures to the hip, spine, and wrist. Men as well as women suffer from osteoporosis, a disease that can be prevented and treated.

Osteoporosis is a major health threat for 28 million Americans, 80% of whom are women. Life underwriters are concerned due to the very high mortality of both men and women in the first year after a fall with hip fracture.

The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends bone mineral density testing for all women over the age of 65 as well as for others who have risk factors for bone loss other than menopause.

Two common misconceptions about osteoporosis are:

Osteoporosis is an inevitable change that occurs with age.

Calcium and increased physical activity will be enough to prevent osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis risk can be minimized by:

Weight bearing exercise.

Calcium supplementation.

Hormone replacement therapy.

Proper nutrition, particularly calcium and Vitamin D.

Fall prevention including installation in the home of grab rails, and improved lighting.

Risk factors for osteoporosis:

GENDER - Women have less bone tissue and lose bone more rapidly than men due to menopause.

AGE - Your bones become less dense and weaker with age.

SIZE - Small, thin boned women are at greatest risk.

ETHNICITY - Caucasian and Asian women are at highest risk. African-American and Latin women have less risk.

ANOREXIA - Lifetime diet low in calcium and Vitamin D.

FAMILY HISTORY - Heredity seems to play a part.

LIFESTYLE - Extensive inactivity or bed rest.

CIGARETTE SMOKING OR EXCESSIVE USE OF ALCOHOL.

IN ORDER TO EVALUATE THE PROSPECT'S INSURABILITY YOU NEED TO ASK THE FOLLOWING IMPORTANT QUESTIONS:

When and how was the diagnosis of osteoporosis made?

Except in unusually severe and debilitating cases, clients with osteoporosis are usually insurable on some basis. The exact date of diagnosis is important in determining the starting point of risk evaluation.

Have bone density tests been performed?

Bone density testing is the only definitive way to assess how severe is the osteoporosis. In the absence of proper testing, the underwriter must assume the worst. A favorable test result may permit a much better offer.

How has the osteoporosis affected the client's functional capacity?

How does the client manage the activities of daily living? Walking, driving an automobile, performing household chores? A well-written cover letter to the underwriter can be very helpful in obtaining a favorable decision.

Is there a history of falls, fractures, or spinal deformity?

Repetitive injuries, or spinal deformity are bound to be viewed much more seriously than an isolated incident.

What medications is the client currently taking?

Be sure to document all medications being taken with dosages. *Does the client remember to take the medicines regularly? Does the client have any other medical problems?*

In addition to the osteoporosis are there other chronic medical problems?

SPECIAL NOTE: It is always important to write a well-documented cover letter to the underwriter, telling her everything she would like to know **BEFORE**, she has to ask. This is especially the case with clients suffering from osteoporosis.