Obese Women Underscreened for Osteoporosis

BY HEIDI SPLETE

WASHINGTON — Obese women are less likely to be screened for osteoporosis than are normal- or overweight women, according to findings from a study of more than 140,000 women included in an integrated health care plan database.

Previous studies have shown mixed results on the disparity in preventive health care for obese patients, compared with normal-weight patients, said Kristi Reynolds, Ph.D., of Kaiser Permanente in Pasadena, Calif., and her colleagues.

"It is largely unknown whether obesity is associated with the quality of care for osteoporosis," the researchers said. Physicians may be less inclined to screen obese women for osteoporosis because body weight is associated with higher bone density, they noted.

Data from 146,975 health care provider visits between July 1, 2007, and June 30, 2008, were reviewed.

The average age of the women was 73 years; 35% were normal weight; 35% were overweight; and the rest were obese.

About 67% of the women had undergone bone mineral density testing within 4 years of the study, which was the criteria by which participants could be considered "screened." Only 52% of women with a BMI of 40 kg/m^2 or higher were screened, compared with 68% of the normal-BMI women, 68% of the overweight women, 67% of obese women with a BMI of 30-34.9, and 63% of obese women with a BMI of 35-39.9.

The findings were presented in a poster at the annual meeting of the Obesity Society. ■

Disclosures: *The researchers reported having no financial conflicts of interest.*