Supplements Don't Cut Fractures in At-Risk

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HARROGATE, ENGLAND — Calcium and vitamin D supplementation do not reduce the risk of clinical fracture among women identified as having one or more risk factors for hip fracture, a randomized controlled trial has shown.

Investigators at the University of York (England), in collaboration with community primary care providers, recruited 3,322 women aged 70 years and older, who had at least one of the following risk factors for hip fracture: previous fracture, low body weight, maternal history of hip fracture, a fall in the previous 12 months, or older age (per year increase).

Approximately half of the women were randomized to receive daily oral supplementation of 1,000 mg of calcium and 800 IU vitamin D, along with a patient information leaflet on dietary calcium intake and fall prevention. The remaining patients were randomized to a control group and received only the patient information leaflet, reported York University research fellow Jill Porthouse in a presentation at the annual conference of the National Osteoporosis Society.

After a median follow-up of 25 months, there were no significant differences between the two groups in the rates of all clinical fractures or hip fractures.

The odds ratio for all fractures in the supplement group compared with the control group was 1.03. For hip fractures specifically, the odds ratio was 0.82, according to the study findings.

These results are disappointing, noted Ms. Porthouse.

"Fall-related low-trauma fractures represent a significant burden of illness in older people. Calcium and vitamin D supplementation is a relatively inexpensive intervention, but it does not appear to reduce fracture rates in women at risk," she noted. ■