

Motivational Mailings Improve DXA Scan Rate

BY KERRI WACHTER

DENVER — Women who are encouraged to self-schedule their dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry scans via mailed brochures and letters undergo more scans than do those in usual practice, but it is still not a silver bullet strategy for identifying women who have osteoporosis.

In study of 3,734 women, mailings of

an educational osteoporosis brochure and a letter providing the opportunity to self-schedule increased the percentage of women receiving dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry (DXA) scans by 13% versus routine care, Dr. Amy Warriner and her coinvestigators reported in a poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Society for Bone Mineral Research.

The study involved 28 primary care

physicians at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. The researchers identified women aged 65 years or older who had not had a DXA scan in the previous 4 years, and were under the care of a university primary care provider.

The participating providers were randomized to provide or not to provide an intervention.

Intervention-group physicians mailed brochures containing information about

osteoporosis and fracture risk. The brochures were created using patient feedback from focus groups. Each mailing included a letter providing patients with the opportunity to self-schedule a DXA scan. Two mailings were sent to each woman.

In all, 665 women were randomized into the intervention group and 3,069 into the control group.

A total of 115 women in the intervention group were determined by their primary care providers not to be medically appropriate for DXA testing. Brochures and letters were mailed to the remaining 550 women.

In the intervention group, 19% of women received DXA scans. Half of these were self-scheduled and half were scheduled by the provider.

In comparison, only 6% of women in the control group had DXA scans. DXA scan self-scheduling and receipt was 13% better with a mailing intervention when compared with normal practice, the researchers noted.

“However, more potent strategies will still be needed to further improve DXA screening rates,” wrote Dr. Warriner, professor of medicine in the division of endocrinology and metabolism at the university.

The study was funded in part by Procter & Gamble, which comarkets the osteoporosis drug risedronate (Actonel).

Dr. Warriner reported that she has a significant financial relationship with Amgen Inc., which is developing the osteoporosis drug denosumab.

Her coinvestigators reported significant financial relationships with a number of pharmaceutical companies that make osteoporosis drugs. ■

VA Links POW Status With Osteoporosis

The federal government has officially recognized a link between being a prisoner of war (POW) and the development of osteoporosis.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has established a presumption of service connection for osteoporosis in former POWs who were interned for at least 30 days and whose osteoporosis is at least 10% disabling. The VA also established the connection for POWs, regardless of length of imprisonment, who have a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder and osteoporosis that is at least 10% disabling.

Creating a presumption of service connection means that these veterans will not have to prove that their condition was caused by their military service in order to receive VA benefits. The VA said that several studies have shown that POWs have suffered serious bone loss because of dietary deficiencies during their imprisonments.

—Mary Ellen Schneider

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