Don't Neglect Vitamin D Levels in Osteoporosis Tx

BY HEIDI SPLETE
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WASHINGTON — Vitamin D levels are inadequate in up to half of postmenopausal women who receive treatment for osteoporosis, Ethel Siris, M.D., reported at an international symposium sponsored by the National Osteoporosis Foundation.

Vitamin D inadequacy was significantly more common among women who took less than 400 IU of vitamin D supplementation daily, compared with women who took at least 400 IU of vitamin D daily (63% vs. 45%).

Previous study findings suggest that serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentrations of at least 30 ng/mL are needed to stabilize serum parathyroid hormone levels, Dr. Siris, director of the metabolic bone diseases program at Columbia University, New York, and her colleagues, wrote in a poster presentation.

In a cross-sectional, observational study conducted between November 2003 and March 2004, the investigators collected blood samples from 1,536 postmenopausal women, mean age 71 years, at 61 sites throughout North America. They used several cut points of serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D to define inadequacy—less than 9 ng/mL, less than 20 ng/mL, less than 25 ng/mL, and less than 30 ng/mL.

Parathyroid hormone values stabilized among patients with serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentrations of at least 29.8 ng/mL, which suggests that concentrations of approximately 30 ng/mL are important for healthy parathyroid levels.

Additional factors significantly related to vitamin D inadequacy in a multivariate analysis included age older than 80 years, BMI greater than 30, lack of exercise, and lack of physician counseling about the importance of vitamin D. More than half (59%) of the women reported that they had not discussed vitamin D with a doctor.

Dr. Siris is a paid consultant for Eli Lilly & Co., Merck & Co., Sanofi Aventis, Procter and Gamble Pharmaceuticals, and Novartis. ■

Calcium-Poor Diets Common In Rich Women

INDIAN WELLS, CALIF. — Educated women of high socioeconomic status do not appear to get enough daily calcium, Andrea Stein, M.D., said at the annual meeting of the Pacific Coast Reproductive Society.

In a survey of 180 middle-aged patients seen in her gynecology practice, in a wealthy area of the Los Angeles region, more than 50% apparently consumed less than 1,000-1,500 mg of calcium per day, Dr. Stein said.

Overall, 86% of the patients had a college degree, and 36% had an advanced degree, she noted. All were 45 years old or older.

Of the 99 patients taking no medications, 75% took a calcium supplement only once a day or less, and 48% had a milk product once a day or less. Of the 60 patients on hormone therapy, 68% took a calcium supplement once a day or less, and 43% had a milk product once or less a day.

For the 21 patients taking a bisphosphonate, raloxifene, or calcitonin, the percentages were 48% and 33%.

A single calcium supplement or a single serving will not provide the recommended amount of calcium for a woman aged 50 years or older, which is 1,200-1,500 mg/day, noted Dr. Stein, whose practice is in Santa Monica, Calif.

Calcium supplements contain only 500-600 mg elemental calcium per tablet, because that is the maximum an individual can absorb at any one time. A single serving size of skim milk, yogurt, or cheese contains only about 300 mg or less of calcium.

The survey findings suggest that women of high socioeconomic status are somewhat better at getting adequate calcium than those of low socioeconomic status, but only marginally so, Dr. Stein said in an interview. According to data from the 1999-2000 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 80% of low-income women do not get adequate daily calcium.

—Timothy F. Kirn