

Suburban Life

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Osteoporosis

the unkindest break of all

By Sherry Kahan
staff writer

DOES GRANDMA fall and break her hip? Or does the bone fracture first and then she fall?

More and more doctors like Jerry Nosanchuk of Franklin are coming to believe that the bones of post-menopausal women can be so

weak that they can break without the impact of a fall. Just break.

The situation is called osteoporosis. "Osteoporosis occurs when the so-called bone loss associated with the aging process is accelerated and exaggerated," Nosanchuk said. He has recently set up the Michigan Center for the Diagnosis and Treatment of Osteoporosis at his Livonia office (427-4076).



Myrtle Riebe, 81, is a prime example of what happens to a woman's body when she has osteoporosis. She has lost seven inches in height due to bone loss spanning more than a decade. Post-menopausal women are a prime target for the bone-thinning condition.

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Nosanchuk graduated from the College of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery in Des Moines and interned at Boston Hospital.

"About 25 percent of women over 50 will have osteoporosis."

After menopause, when women's ovaries stop producing estrogen, the estrogen level drops considerably. Estrogen has a protecting effect on the bone.

"The significance of this is that in a period of 15-20 years, a woman can lose 30 percent of her bone mineral content."

Removal of ovaries, which often accompanies a hysterectomy, can bring on what is termed surgical menopause because it cuts off the estrogen supply.

Fractures of the wrist when a woman is about 50 can be the body's way of announcing the onset of osteoporosis.

"It is now incumbent on every treating physician who sees a fracture in a middle-age woman to either evaluate her for osteoporosis or send her to someone for this purpose."

According to authorities, the wrist fracture in females can be the earliest sign of osteoporosis.

MYRTLE RIEBE, 81, of Redford recently lunched her way into Nosanchuk's office holding onto a walker.

Here is an obvious case of osteoporosis because she has what is called a dowager's hump. It was formed as a result of fractures in the vertebrae in the bones of her back, which are primarily made of trabecular bone. This kind of bone undergoes the greatest and earliest loss of bone material.

Riebe was willing to be photographed and to talk about her problem so others could understand what could happen if they don't learn about osteoporosis.

She broke her hip last September, but she had her first fracture at 45. However, no one saw that fracture as a signal.

"That's when we want action," Nosanchuk said. But no connection was made in those days between middle-age fractures and osteoporosis, even though she was treated by Detroit physicians and at the famed Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

"They never identified it or put me on calcium," she said. "I'm not angry. But I would have worked longer and enjoyed life more if I had had adequate care."

Later, she had many other fractures in her back and shoulder. "But nobody breathed a word about osteoporosis."

WITH RIEBE WAS her daughter, Isabelle Wild of Redford, who knows that because her mother and her grandmother had osteoporosis, she and her daughter are at risk.

Although Wild has lost only three-fourths of an inch, she is planning to take calcium to fight the problem.

"I'm glad there is publicity about this because if you lose your ability to move around and do for yourself, you lose some of your self-respect," she said.

Please turn to Page 4

Photos by Dan Dean

"It is now incumbent on every treating physician who sees a fracture in a middle-age woman to either evaluate her for osteoporosis or send her to someone for this purpose."

— Dr. Jerry Nosanchuk



... And ways to prevent it

Exercise and eat well, and make sure you get enough calcium if you want to avoid a bone loss problem called osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is caused by thinning of the bones. It results in fractures of wrists and hips, dowager's hump and in some cases, pain.

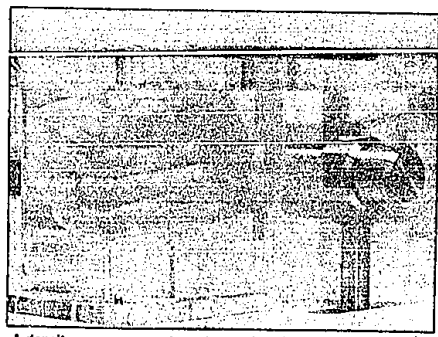
Ways to protect yourself from these problems are included in a book called "Stand Tall! The Informed Woman's Guide to Preventing Osteoporosis." Its authors are Dr. Morris Nadelvitz and Marsha Ware. He is a professor at the University of Florida Center for Climacteric Studies, which established one of the first osteoporosis screening centers in the country.

The information in the book is directed particularly to women because "loss of bone begins sooner and pro-

ceeds twice as rapidly in women as it does in men." The book adds: "More common in older women than heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis or breast cancer, osteoporosis presents one of the greatest health threats to your late years both in terms of the quality and the length of your life."

IN THE PREVENTION department the authors lay the biggest stress on calcium intake, which like the other measures suggested, should begin early in life. The authors say that most American women consume daily "a mere 450 milligrams" of calcium. However, the recommended daily allowance (RDA) of calcium for adults is 800 milligrams.

Please turn to Page 4



A densitometer measures bone loss quickly and without pain using a low dose of radiation.

Friendship group hosts top-ranked China officials

By Susan Thygeson-Aktry
special writer

The U.S.-China Peoples Friendship Association (USCPFA) of Detroit will host a Spring Banquet 7 p.m. Friday, April 6, at the Birmingham Community House at which special guest speaker Minister Hu Ding-Yi of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, will talk about "China Today."

The dinner, which will be open to the public, will give association members and guests an opportunity to meet one of the People's Republic's highest ranking representatives to the United States.

Hu Ding-Yi has been Minister of the Chinese embassy in Washington, D.C. since he left the post of Consul General in San Francisco. Prior to that he spent six years in London as the Counselor to the Chinese embassy.

Previous assignments have included First Secretary of the embassy in Ghana in the '60s, after which he served as the Division Chief of the African Department of the Foreign Ministry in Beijing (Peking).

Married to Madame Xie Heng (pronounced Shee-a-heng), the couple have two children, a son, who is a student in Canada, and a daughter, who lives in China. Madame Xie Heng will accompany her husband to Detroit.

THE USCPFA is an education, non-profit organization with a goal of establishing friendship and understanding between the people of the United States and China. According to Bloomfield Hills attorneys, John and Genevieve O'Hara, "Our original goal was normalization of relations between the two countries."

However, O'Hara explained, "After the overthrow of the 'Gang of Four,' the members of the association were the first group China gave visas to. In 1974, we had about 100 chapters of over 8,000 members. Since then, the USCPFA has taken more than 10,000 Americans on educational tours of China."

O'Hara, who has just completed a term on the national board, and his wife are members of the board of directors of the local chapter, which attracts its membership from metropolitan Detroit. In Oakland County the membership is drawn from Birmingham, Southfield, West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills. Current chairman of the local board is Doug Barnes, a Detroit architect.

"Our main office is located in the Sacred Heart Seminary, but we meet in private homes in the Bloomfield area. We have a current membership of 350-300," said Mrs. O'Hara.

The O'Haras were quick to mention

that the efforts of Charles and Terrie Wong were responsible for Minister Hu's visit. Wong is a research physicist for Ford Motor Co. His wife Terrie has been very helpful to visiting Chinese students, said Mrs. O'Hara. She referred to the couple as "... the Gateway to America for the Chinese in this area."

ONE OF THE primary services of the USCPFA has been to welcome and host Chinese nationals who come to the United States for graduate studies, said O'Hara.

He observed, "We take them apple picking in the fall." His wife added, "Square dancing is quite popular with the Chinese scholars, too."

The group also holds dinners and other social gatherings for its members and the visiting Chinese students, most of whom attend Wayne State University.

Another function of the group is to provide Chinese students with educational programs to public schools. Recently, the couple provided programs to schools in downtown Detroit, as well as in the Birmingham area.

"We're also trying to start a pen pal program for students," said O'Hara.

"One-third to one-fourth of the world's population is Chinese," said his wife, "so we think the more under-

standing, the better, especially for future generations."

The couple's interest in China stems from O'Hara's interest in sculpture, and his appreciation of Chinese accomplishments in that area.

"Fifteen-hundred years B.C., they were doing bronze casts that we find hard to duplicate today," he found. A class in conversational Chinese culminated in their going to China as "Friendship Delegates" in 1977. They have returned to China a number of times since then, he said.

"They really respond to visiting Americans," Mrs. O'Hara commented.

IN ADDITION to citing the Chinese invention of paper, gun powder and porcelain, O'Hara pointed out a recent archeological phenomenon in China that has made history. "Some farmers near Xian were digging a well a mile from the tomb of Empress Chin, for whom China was named. They found a whole army, between 5,000 and 6,000 life-sized figures. The Chinese have built a dome over the site and are still excavating what the National Geographic calls the 'Incredible First of the Century.'" The site has become a major tourist attraction, he said.

The association has also established a Center for Teaching about China in Washington, D.C. to make it easier for educators to find instructional materi-

als and curriculum units for China studies at all levels. Hugh Deane of New York, recently appointed to be director of the center, followed Mary Kay Hobbs, who has gone to Hong Kong. The center also publishes a quarterly review on China.

According to O'Hara, the association is recognized by the official Chinese government as the main friendship organization in the United States. YOUXI is the governmental department in China which provides liaison between the association and the Chinese government, he said.

Genevieve O'Hara said, "We pretty much agree that the Taiwan issue is an internal affair." However, the members of the local chapter, she said, represent a "delightful" variety of viewpoints, backgrounds, occupations and interests.

ORGANIZATION TOURS, said O'Hara, are a really unusual educational experience. These are unique. We go into schools and factories. There's a lot of sightseeing, but over 50 percent of China is rural, so we also go out and talk to the people in the communities."

While the average person in China makes about \$40-50 per month, John O'Hara said, they only have to pay about 10 percent of it for rent. In some communes, the people earn work points

rather than a paycheck, which they can later exchange for cash or services.

"Our guides are always educated and very charming," he said.

Changes in the Chinese culture have been striking over the last few decades, he said.

"In 1959 they did away with all laws, but now the lawyers are back in the courts, and the monks are back in the temples. The shelves are full, and the housing is much improved because new construction is increasing the availability of homes. The Chinese can own their own homes, they just don't own the land," O'Hara said.

"In large cities, one murder a year is shocking," he said, pointing out the positive aspects of the country's responsibility system.

"Even recreation and gardening were discouraged during the Cultural Revolution but now, along with music and other areas of cultural endeavor, they are flourishing."

Upcoming association plans will be highlighted by the visit of Minister Hu and Madame Xie Heng, who is the First Secretary of the embassy in Washington, D.C. She is also in charge of cultural programs and friendship liaison.

"We also plan to go to China again later this year," Mrs. O'Hara said.

Tickets to the dinner are priced \$25 per person. For information and tickets, call Dr. Robert Colton, 831-1499.