

Awareness and knowledge of osteoporosis in Switzerland

Objective: To study the awareness and knowledge of osteoporosis in the Swiss population.

Research design: Telephone interviews.

Respondents: A total of 1,006 German and French speaking residents of Switzerland aged between 40 and 70 years were interviewed. Mean age was about 53 years (52.8 ± 9.2). Nearly 60% of the subjects interviewed were women. 90.3% of the individuals were Swiss. The majority of individuals (68.2%) had a professional qualification or a graduate/post-graduate level of education (15.2%).

Methods: A structured questionnaire with 28 osteoporosis related questions was developed for this survey. Questions related to the awareness, knowledge, beliefs of osteoporosis, and occurrence in the family were asked. Knowledge questions were concentrated on four areas which included osteoporosis related health problems, preventative behaviours, 'bone-healthy' nutrition habits and risk factors. Sources of information and awareness of a health information campaign mediated by posters were also assessed.

Results: Approximately 98% of the respondents were aware of osteoporosis ($p < 0.001$). Women were significantly more informed about the four knowledge areas of osteoporosis compared to men (48.8% vs 27.1%, respectively; $p < 0.001$). Individuals with high interest in health related questions were significantly more knowledgeable than subjects with a low interest in health issues (44.1% vs 34.4%, respectively; $p < 0.001$). Women's knowledge was highest in the age group 50-59 years (53.2%, $p = 0.043$). Well educated women (56.4%, graduate/post-graduate qualification) knew significantly more than less educated women (37.1%, $p < 0.001$). Men with a professional qualification knew more (29.4%, $p < 0.001$) compared to men either with a lower (14%) or higher education (27.6%). Swiss women and men knew significantly more than foreigners. Individuals located in the German speaking region were more knowledgeable than those living in the French speaking parts of

Switzerland. Only 11.3% of all respondents were concerned about developing osteoporosis. Self-perceived risk of women and men with a family member suffering from osteoporosis was significantly higher in both groups. The main sources of information were the mass media. Family doctors and pharmacists were significantly more often regarded as a source of osteoporosis knowledge by older women and men. The Swiss osteoporosis campaign did not reach its target audience which resulted in a low motivation to initiate any osteoporosis related action.

Conclusion: The awareness of osteoporosis in the Swiss population was high. However, detailed knowledge about health problems, preventative behaviours, 'bone-healthy' nutrition habits and risk factors were low. The low self-susceptibility to osteoporosis reflects significant public misperception about the consequences of osteoporosis.