



MEDIA RELEASE

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New doctors' test kit to help prevent debilitating osteoporosis

New Garvan Project Funded by MBF Foundation

Men and women at risk of developing osteoporosis will soon be working closely with their doctors to prevent the onset of this debilitating and often deadly disease thanks to a new Garvan research project funded by MBF Foundation.

Researchers at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research are developing a tool-kit to educate doctors on osteoporosis and provide them with a focussed set of effective, easy-to-use risk factor tests that will lead directly to preventive programs designed to reduce the risk and impact of the condition.

Garvan's Professor John Eisman said the two-year project is the latest extension of the world renowned Dubbo Osteoporosis Study which, since its inception 18 years ago, has provided landmark advances in global understanding of osteoporosis.

"We have shown that a tendency to fall over, weak muscles and low bone density all contribute to the risk of osteoporotic fractures and that bone and weight loss are predictors of poor health outcomes," said Professor Eisman.

"We have also debunked the myth that osteoporosis is an elderly women's disease. Both men and women lose bone as they get older and 25-30 per cent of men will have an osteoporotic fracture in their life-time," he said.

Osteoporosis is a condition in which bones become fragile and brittle, leading to a higher risk of breaks or cracks. It happens when bones lose minerals such as calcium faster than the body can replace them resulting in thinner, less dense bones.

Dr Christine Bennett, chair of the MBF Foundation Steering Committee and Chief Medical Officer at MBF, said that currently older people are more likely to have osteoporosis than high cholesterol so preventing this cruel disease is vital for healthy ageing.

"The Dubbo Study has shown there are markedly greater health care costs than previously considered for osteoporosis," Dr Bennett said. "This exciting new initiative has the potential to reduce these costs and improve our quality of life as we get older."

The MBF Foundation is a charitable institution set up by MBF to support and manage important health initiatives for the community using a portion of MBF Group's investment income each year. Projects undertaken encompass three key areas – wellness and obesity, supporting healthy ageing and keeping healthcare affordable.

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