

ORTHOPEDICS

New Protocol for Osteoporosis

Two million bone fractures a year occur because of Osteoporosis—a disease that causes bones to weaken, making them more likely to break. Every year, 300,000 people break their hip; 25% of these patients will end up in nursing homes, 50% will never regain previous function and, 25% die within the first year after the fracture. While Osteoporosis is usually the cause for broken bones in people age 50 and older, it often goes undiagnosed by healthcare providers.

Teddy Bezozza thanks the team at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJ) for saving him from becoming a statistic. In May, Mr. Bezozza was rushed to RWJ after he sustained a left femoral hip fracture while riding his bike and is now one of many patients to benefit from RWJ's new Osteoporosis Quality Improvement Program.

According to Charles J. Gatt, Jr., MD, Chief of Orthopedics at UMDNJ-RWJ, patients who sustain fragility fractures (fractures caused by weak or fragile bones) are often only treated for the injury at the hospital and not the underlying cause, which is usually Osteoporosis.

The RWJ Osteoporosis Quality Improvement Program was developed by a group of healthcare professionals consisting of orthopaedic residents, nurse practitioners, and family and internal medicine physicians that wanted to put an end to the problem. It requires that all patients like Mr. Bezozza (age 50 and older that are admitted to the hospital because of a broken bone) undergo automatic screening for osteoporosis, along with a falls risk assessment and Vitamin D and calcium supplementation. For Mr. Bezozza, this protocol was literally a lifesaver. His test results revealed that he had Osteoporosis and doctors were able to institute proper treatment.

RWJ was one of about 25 institutions who participated in The Joint Commission Osteoporosis Pilot Program which established

performance measures for fracture patients over 50. The Joint Commission is an independent, not-for-profit organization that certifies more than 19,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. It's recognized nationwide as a symbol of quality that reflects an organization's commitment to meeting certain performance standards.

"We're developing the best practice standards that other institutions will be implementing in the future," said Kelly Young, MSN, RN and Assistant VP for Patient Safety and Quality at RWJ.

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"Because we were already implementing many of the practices in our Quality Improvement Program, other pilot institutions began copying our efforts.

"The Program we created is essentially a quality improvement project that first and foremost benefits our patients," Dr. Gatt added. "As Orthopedics continues to move forward, I think this program and those like it will ultimately improve the outcome of patient care at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital."

For patients like Mr. Bezozza, this is great news. "Because of the bone density test that was ordered at RWJ, I'm now getting the treatment I need so my bones can be strong and healthy again," Mr. Bezozza said. "It's a blessing they caught it in time."

Visit www.rwjuh.edu/osteoporosis
or call 1-888-MD-RWJUH.

Shown: Teddy Bezozza is slowly easing back into his longtime hobby of cycling after a broken bone led to a diagnosis and continued treatment for osteoporosis, a disease of the bones which leads to an increased risk for fractures.