

OLDER WOMEN'S KNOWLEDGE ABOUT OSTEOPOROSIS: A DESCRIPTIVE EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEY

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Purpose: The purpose of this study was to examine knowledge about the risk factors and current treatment options for osteoporosis among older women in the North Central Florida region.

Method: A convenience sample of 193 postmenopausal women were recruited from health-care clinics, retirement communities, and community senior centers in urban and rural locations in Alachua and Suwannee Counties located in North Central Florida. A descriptive survey utilizing a structured-interview format was administered by the investigators to ascertain older women's knowledge about the risk factors for osteoporosis, manifestations of postmenopausal bone loss, and current prevention and treatment options available for osteoporosis.

Findings: The mean age of the postmenopausal women interviewed was 69 years (range 46 to 95 years of age). The results indicated that 43% had a history of osteoporosis with 32% experiencing an accidental fall within the last 5 years. In addition, 40% had experienced a bone fracture, yet, 83% did not take hormone replacement therapy coinciding with 74% who were not taking medications to treat osteoporosis. The results obtained from a combined knowledge index indicated that only 14% demonstrated good knowledge about risk factors, current treatment options, and prevention strategies for osteoporosis. In contrast, the combined knowledge index revealed 22% demonstrated poor knowledge in this area and unable to identify risk factors, current treatment options, and prevention strategies for osteoporosis.

Discussion: The findings of this study indicate that older postmenopausal women are not well informed about the risk factors and treatment options available for osteoporosis. The implications for future research include the need for osteoporosis educational program development focused on specific educational aims to increase older women's knowledge of osteoporosis. Additional research implications also involve the investigation into fall prevention strategies. In conclusion, the knowledge gained from this study will enhance the development of nursing intervention strategies aimed at reducing the health-care and quality of life impact of osteoporosis-related bone fractures among the increasing population of older women.