



EMBARGOED UNTIL OCTOBER 13, 9.00 AM CET

Former Bond girl Ursula Andress urges women to say “Doctor: No” to osteoporosis

- ▶ **New survey challenges society’s outdated view of women with osteoporosis as frail and vulnerable. More than 90% of women say disease won’t stop them living life to the full¹**
- ▶ **Launching campaign, Ursula Andress tells women: “Check your bones year after year. Osteoporosis has not stopped me, and shouldn’t stop you either”**

Brussels, 13 October 2008 – Results of a new international survey announced today highlighted a radical shift in women’s attitudes towards osteoporosis, the bone-weakening disease.

The traditional view of osteoporosis patients as frail and vulnerable women is shattered by an international survey of 500 doctors and 1,000 women in five countries. This survey found that 93% of respondents are determined not to let their osteoporosis prevent them from living life to the full¹.

The survey forms the cornerstone of a new campaign, launched today by the International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF) and Medical Women’s International Association (MWIA), which aims to challenge outdated stereotypes and educate women about osteoporosis.

The launch event in Brussels was attended by actress Ursula Andress, who played iconic James Bond girl Honey Ryder in the 1962 film “Dr No”. Ms Andress, who has been diagnosed with an early form of osteoporosis herself, said: “I am excited to support the ‘Timeless Women Campaign’ because it is intended for independent women like me who live active, full lives and don’t want osteoporosis to lessen our lust for life or hold us prisoner. Osteoporosis is a ‘silent thief’ that can take away the strength of your bones, and your ability to keep active, without you even realising it. But with early diagnosis, a positive attitude and the treatment that best suits your lifestyle, osteoporosis does not have to affect your everyday life.”

Women with osteoporosis have careers, family, travel and enjoy an intense life in a way that would have astounded their mothers. These women do not want to be defined by their disease. In fact, 85% of women with osteoporosis surveyed describe themselves as being active and only 23% feel they are ‘frail and fragile’ while only 31% think the disease had a negative impact on their lives¹.

In contrast, the doctors who were surveyed appear to have a more stereotypical image of the disease and those who are affected by it. Over half (58%) described women with osteoporosis as ‘frail and fragile’¹. In all, 75% believed that osteoporosis had a negative impact on women’s outlook on life, while 61% felt that osteoporosis prevented women from participating in everyday activities such as shopping and socialising¹.

The views of women and their doctors also diverge when considering the best treatment for osteoporosis. Asked about their own patients, the doctors surveyed thought only 33% sometimes missed a treatment dose¹.

Alarming, 70% of women surveyed confessed to accidentally or even worse, deliberately skipping a dose¹. Reasons cited for deliberately not taking their medication included side effects (18%), confusing treatment instructions (11%), inconvenient treatment that interfered with day-to-day life (12%), and ineffectiveness of medication (12%)¹.

“It is clear that many current treatments can be difficult or inconvenient to take correctly, although complete adherence to osteoporosis treatment is necessary at all times for maximum fracture protection,” said Professor Steven Boonen, MD, PhD, Professor of Medicine at the Leuven University Department of Experimental Medicine Belgium, and Member of the International Osteoporosis Foundation’s Committee of Scientific Advisors. “Patients who take their medication less than half of the time receive minimal or no fracture protection². It is important that doctors work with their patients to better understand the needs and lifestyles of women with the disease.”

Findings from the survey underline a shared goal and this desire for partnership, with both women with osteoporosis and doctors agreeing on the importance of finding an effective a more convenient treatment that allows women to maintain their lifestyle and manage their disease year after year.

While women with osteoporosis and doctors appear to be relatively satisfied with current treatments, 74% of women felt that less frequent dosing schedules would better suit their lifestyle¹. Despite a range of treatment options available, less than half of women surveyed (43%) could actually remember their doctors discussing alternative treatments with different dosing frequencies¹.

“Dialogue between doctor and patient is so important,” commented Dr Shelley Ross, Secretary General to the MWIA, speaking at the campaign launch. “As an organisation which represents female doctors, the MWIA has a dual interest in ensuring the success of this new campaign: for the women who are affected by the disease and those who treat them.”

More than 200 million people around the world are affected by osteoporosis³, yet the condition often goes unrecognised and under diagnosed due to the lack of symptoms. Most people only find out they have it when they actually suffer a broken bone. “The serious consequences of osteoporosis are often overlooked,” said Dr Daniel Navid, Senior Consultant to IOF. “Many people know that osteoporosis leads to broken bones but hardly anyone realises that 20% of men and women aged over 50 who suffer a hip fracture may die within one year of its consequences⁴. That is why this campaign and others like it are so important.”

“Women need to speak up about their bone health and talk to their doctor about the best treatment for them,” said Ursula Andress. “They need to find a therapy that will not only help to protect them against osteoporosis year after year, but will also suit their varied and active lives. My advice to women with this disease is to be happy, be aware and take care!”

The Research

The survey was conducted in July 2008 by the independent market research company Double Helix in France, Germany, Mexico, Switzerland and the UK. In each country, 100 doctors and 200 female osteoporosis patients (55 years old or over) were surveyed by telephone, with a total survey population of 1,500. Patients were asked to consider their own experience, while doctors were asked to consider their experience with their own patients. The patients and doctors who were interviewed had no connection with each other.

Full survey results are available in a report entitled 'Timeless Women: The Campaign for Stronger Bones' available at: www.fortimelesswomen.com. The campaign was supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Novartis.

About IOF

The IOF is based in Switzerland which functions as a global alliance of patients, medical and research societies, scientists, health care professionals, and international companies concerned about bone health. It is the largest global non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of osteoporosis. The IOF aims to increase awareness and understanding of osteoporosis; motivate people to take action to prevent, diagnose and treat osteoporosis; and support national osteoporosis societies in order to maximize their effectiveness.

About MWIA

The MWIA is an international NGO representing women doctors from all five continents. The goals of the MWIA include: to promote the cooperation of Medical Women in different countries and to develop friendship and understanding between Medical Women throughout the world; to actively work against gender related inequalities in the medical profession between female and male doctors including gender career opportunities and economical aspects; to actively work to overcome gender-related differences in health and healthcare between men and women, girls and boys throughout the world; and to offer medical women the opportunity to meet so as to confer upon questions concerning the health and well-being of humanity.

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- ³ The International Osteoporosis Foundation. *Epidemiology*. Available at: www.iofbonehealth.org/health-professionals/about-osteoporosis/epidemiology.html. Last accessed September 2008.
- ⁴ Leibson CL, Tosteson AN, Gabriel SE, et al. Mortality, disability, and nursing home use for persons with and without hip fracture: a population-based study. *J Am Geriatr Soc.* 2002; 50:1644.