

Date 5<sup>th</sup> August 2008

media release

Doctors at Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital are now able to accurately diagnose and help prevent osteoporosis in one quick, simple, low radiation procedure.

The new bone scanning machine, known as Dual X-ray Absorptiometry – or DEXA - is considered one of the most accurate measurements of bone mineral density and also allows clinicians to estimate a patient's risk of fracture.

Osteoporosis is a disease where the bones become fragile, porous and brittle and even a minor bump or fall can cause a serious fracture.

In Australia, 50 per cent of women and 33 per cent of men over 60 years of age will have an osteoporotic fracture.

Osteoporosis Australia reports that osteoporosis and fractures are major causes of injury, long-term disability and even death in older Australians. Twenty-five per cent of people who suffer a hip fracture will die within six months. Of those who survive, 50 per cent will be unable to stay in their own homes or walk without help.

According to Associate Professor Kurrle, Director of Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital's Rehabilitation and Aged Care, this is serious business.

"Many people believe that the symptoms of fractures, height loss or rounding of the spine are simply due to 'old age' and think that osteoporosis is a normal part of ageing. But it's not. It's a disease," she said.

Osteoporosis is often called a silent disease as there are usually no signs or symptoms until someone has a fracture. However, for many people osteoporotic fractures can be prevented. To do this, it is essential that fractures are identified and treated as early as possible.

Health guidelines recommend women over 50 who have had a fracture following minimal trauma, and anyone aged more than 75 years, should have a BMD scan performed every two years.

"Early detection of bone loss is vital. Osteoporosis is something people don't have to suffer with. We can treat it and prevent it from becoming a problem," Associate Professor Kurrle said.

People requiring a DEXA scan need to be referred by their General Practitioner (GP) to Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital's Bone and Balance Clinic. Patients eligible for a Medicare rebate will be bulked billed for the procedure. After the completion of the scan a report is sent to the referring GP and, if appropriate, additional treatment and interventions are recommended.

For further details about the service contact Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital's Bernard Curran Clinic on 9477 9514.

**Media contact:** Debbie Eldridge Ph: 9477 9155 : 0404 020 330