

Stop osteoporosis from fracturing your life

BusinessMirror · 10 Nov 2022 · B4 · To know more about programs for osteoporosis awareness, visit ospfi's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Osteoporosisphilippines>.

Astooped posture and an aching back are the common symptoms of osteoporosis that people are aware of. Unknown to many is that osteoporosis does not always exhibit a symptom. This silent disease often goes unnoticed until the patient suffers osteoporotic fractures, which can cause pain, swelling, and bruising. Many also think that osteoporosis is a health concern only for the elderly and those with sedentary lifestyle. While it is more common in older adults, this bone disease can strike at any age. It can happen even to adults with active lifestyle. It happened to a multi-awarded dancesport athlete.

A ballerina's porous bones

Ballerina and dancesport champion Anna Marie Periquet was 49 when she was diagnosed with osteoporosis. A swollen foot and severe pain in the back, knees, and feet prompted her to seek medical help. After taking a bone mineral density test, her doctors revealed that she already had multiple fractures and bones like those of an 80-year-old woman. Anna also suffered from lumbar spondylosis, periostitis of the foot and lower extremity neuroma.

With her healthy diet and active lifestyle, she never imagined herself to suffer from a bone disease. She was not spared from bearing the brunt of having porous bones as she ticked off all the items on the osteoporosis risk factor list: woman with a small body frame, Caucasian or Asian, and perimenopausal. She consequently was not able to continue her dance training and fitness program that her body was used to.

"Throughout my difficulties with osteoporosis, I learned the valuable lesson of acceptance and the joy that comes with it," Anna shared. "There are certain movements that I can't do as well as before or totally anymore, but I have found that healing begins and happiness takes over when we accept defeats but still take a chance to change our life for the better, despite our limitations."

According to Dr. Monica Therese Cabral, Former President of the Osteoporosis Society of the Philippines Foundation, Inc. (OSPFI), an estimated 8.9 million Filipinos have osteoporosis. People gradually start losing bone mass from age 35, but women, especially those who have early menopause or who underwent a hysterectomy, are more likely to have osteoporosis.

"Taking care of our bone health should start in childhood. Physical activity, especially exercises that involve weight-bearing, such as walking and jogging, can help make bones stronger and healthier," Dr. Cabral explained. "As we age, we slowly lose bone mass, but the higher the peak bone mass in your youth, the less likely it is to develop osteoporosis in the future."

An irreversible disease that weakens the bones

Osteoporosis is a disease that causes bones to become porous and weak. It develops when bone mineral density decreases due to various factors like poor nutrition, low physical activity, age, hormonal changes, unhealthy lifestyle choices, and certain medical conditions. With weak bones, a person's risk of fracture increases that even simple movements like sneezing or lifting a grocery bag can cause a bone to break. The painful reality is that there is no cure for osteoporosis. However, there are ways to lower the risk of fractures and strengthen the bones.

"There are two types of effective medications for osteoporosis—one slows down bone resorption, the other aids in bone growth," explained Dr. Edgar Eufemio, Medical Director of the Peak Form Sports Recovery Center and Chairman of the Cardinal Santos Medical Center (CMSC) Sports Medicine Institute.

"Aside from medications, one should also have adequate Calcium and Vitamin D intake and proper diet and engage in resistance exercises that promote muscle toning using weights and activities that aid in coordin-

ation and balance, like Yoga, pilates, tai Chi,” he continued.

In Anna’s case, dr. eufemio recommended a teriparatide injection that works fast in aiding bone growth, although it requires daily injections. Anna administered the bone-regenerating drug to herself for 18 months. she also underwent regular physical therapy and maintained a healthy lifestyle. After ten months, she was well on her way to recovery.

Living life with osteoporosis

Her recovery journey is a story of hope for every person enduring the pain of weak and broken bones. Certainly, there is life after osteoporosis. despite having the disease, Anna once again enjoys living her life to the fullest—working in the corporate world, dancing, and performing onstage. receiving the right treatment and committing to a healthy lifestyle are crucial to enjoying life even with osteoporosis.

“living with osteoporosis is possible and I want to show to everyone that this disease is beatable and treatable,” said Anna. “We must do our part to raise awareness for prevention and treatment of osteoporosis and low bone mass and inform those who suffer from it that they can live their lives to the fullest with proper knowledge and guidance.”

Spreading hope through awareness campaign

Knowing how difficult it is to live with the disease, Anna sought to empower those with osteoporosis by embracing an advocacy. she agreed to be a lay spokesperson of the ospfi, and as she celebrates 50 years of dance this year, she is also embarking on a passion project to raise awareness on osteoporosis and promote bone health through dance and movement healing.

“osteoporosis is a chronic preventable illness that is fast becoming a world health problem,” said dr. theresa Marie Valdezfaller, president of ospfi. “our mission is to promote the study of osteoporosis through education, advocacy and research.”

to educate Filipinos on how to prevent osteoporosis, ospfi continues to implement programs and activities such as annual conventions with international and local speakers, post graduate courses as well as research grants for scientists and physicians conducting studies on this disease. outreach programs for barangay and rural health workers, and lay fora for the patients and their relatives are also done in various provinces to increase awareness.

there is something that can be done to stop bones from breaking. osteoporosis is a disease that can be prevented through lifestyle changes. there are also ways for people with osteoporosis to receive relief and live a normal life.