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### Fracture Protection That Lasts

*From Duke University*

A recent study concluded that osteoporosis patients who take Fosamax for 5 years have nearly the same protection from bone fractures as patients who take the bone-building drug for 10 years. The national study of 1,099 women with osteoporosis suggests that Fosamax—one of a class of drugs called bisphosphonates—builds up and persists in the body's osteoclasts, or bone-building cells.

Duke geriatrician Cathleen Colón-Emeric, M.D., MHSc, who wrote the editorial accompanying the study's publication a December, 2006, issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, says patients who have done well on Fosamax can safely consider a "holiday" from the drug—although this would apply only to those who have not suffered a fracture or a significant loss of bone density.

Patients could not only save 5 years' worth of prescription costs, but also any side effects of the drug, which for some include reflux disease. "It's an attractive benefit of this drug, to be able to get 10 years of benefit for only 5 years of taking it," says Colón-Emeric.

*Dear Reader,*

*In this issue we explore some novel new surgical strategies employed at WorldCare Consortium hospitals that have patients up and about in record time. Using the latest medical technology available to plan and execute minimally invasive surgery, these hospitals are drastically shortening recovery times and significantly improving their patients' quality of life.*

*Sincerely,*

*Rebika Shaw,  
Regional Director, Corporate Communications*

### HEALTH NEWS

#### The Cutting Edge of Hip Replacement

*From Duke University*

A professional back-up singer takes a gig less than three weeks after her surgery. A retired university chancellor goes hunting 22 days after his operation. Stories of rapid postoperative recovery are not particularly notable in these days of minimally invasive surgery. But after a total hip replacement? It's nothing short of remarkable, says Duke orthopedic surgeon Scott Kelley, M.D., about the results he's seen after employing a new muscle-sparing total hip replacement (THR) technique.

Discussions at a surgical meeting last year piqued Kelley's interest in the new approach developed by German orthopedic surgeon Heinz Röttinger, M.D. Röttinger adapted a procedure from the 1930s and devised a modified split surgical table that accommodates the correct leg position during the operation. During muscle-sparing THR, instead of cutting through muscle as with traditional approaches, the surgeon obtains access to the hip joint by passing between muscles in the thigh and hip. Less muscle damage means less pain, less blood loss and faster recovery.

Patients who underwent the new technique after conventional THR on the opposite leg were amazed when their recovery time went from months to weeks, Kelley notes. Patients are often on their feet the day of their surgery, go home after two days, and walk without assistance after two weeks.

To aid in preoperative planning, the surgical team employs digital templating—a technology that superimposes an image of the prosthetic over a digital x-ray of the pelvis. To guide patients through the experience, the team developed an educational DVD that explains all aspects of their care and offers tips on preparing the home to accommodate the patient.

#### Pain Relievers Linked to High Blood Pressure

*From Brigham and Women's Hospital*

Researchers have found that three commonly used over-the-counter drugs—acetaminophen, ibuprofen and aspirin—increase the risk of developing high blood pressure in middle-aged men.



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"Given the high levels of consumption of these drugs and the increasing rate of hypertension, these over-the-counter analgesics should be taken with greater caution," says John P. Forman, M.D., of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. "This is a potentially preventable cause of high blood pressure."

Researchers analyzed questionnaires from 16,031 men with a mean age of 65 years old without a history of high blood pressure. They observed a significant independent association between the frequency of analgesic use and risk of hypertension among all three classes of drugs studied. Compared to men who didn't take the applicable analgesic:

- Men who took acetaminophen 6 to 7 days per week had a 34 percent increased risk of hypertension.
- Men who took ibuprofen 6 to 7 days per week had a 38 percent increased risk of hypertension.
- Men who took aspirin 6 to 7 days per week had a 26 percent increased risk of hypertension.
- The more analgesic pills taken per week, and the more frequently they were taken, the higher the risk for hypertension.

The findings were published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

## Lung Cancer Surgery by Scope Can Improve Chemotherapy

From Duke University

Patients who undergo a minimally invasive lung cancer surgery called thoracoscopic lobectomy may derive more benefit from the chemotherapy that follows, according to Duke University Medical Center researchers. These patients also have shorter hospital stays and accelerated recovery

## NEWS ON WORLDCARE

WorldCare Caribbean makes waves. In an interview featured in Caribbean Business in April, Juan A. Terrassa, President and CEO of WorldCare Caribbean, discussed the progress made by one of the newest WorldCare affiliates. Their first contract is with First Medical Health Plan, the first health insurance company in Puerto Rico to use WorldCare's service, which has now grown to cover over 300,000 people. With an eye to further expansion, Mr. Terrassa now has plans to enroll additional groups and is looking to bring the service to other Caribbean islands.

### "The second medical opinion was essential" Patient Perspective

*"Apart from the relief I felt, the second medical opinion was essential to evaluate and treat my case.... The U.S. specialist suggested a ... therapy of real value to my diagnosis and treatment.... I was lucky to have access to a valuable medical opinion, without the need of travel. A real savings of money, on top of the right treatment."*

### About WorldCare

The global health care community has trusted WorldCare since 1994, when it became the first company to offer physician-referred, patient-specific, second opinion e-consultations (telemedicine) for serious illnesses. WorldCare benefits patients around the world by providing access to top physicians, cutting edge medical practices and best medical advice through highly specialized electronic medical opinions from the best medical centers in the United States.

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time compared with patients who have their tumors removed using the traditional surgical approach that involves opening the chest.

"This study showed that patients who had the minimally invasive operation were less likely to experience delays in receiving chemotherapy or a reduction in the amount of chemotherapy we were able to give," said Thomas D'Amico, M.D., a lung surgeon and senior investigator on the study. "Chemotherapy after surgery has been shown to improve survival in lung cancer patients, so the more effectively we deliver that chemotherapy, the better."

Thoracoscopic lobectomy is performed through two or three small incisions in the side of the chest. Surgeons insert a camera through one of the incisions and

view the inside of the chest on a video screen, while manipulating instruments through the other incisions to remove the tumors. Open surgery to remove lung tumors—called thoracotomy—requires surgeons to make larger incisions and spread or cut the ribs in order to access the patient's lungs.

Doctors have been using thoracoscopic lobectomy as a surgical alternative for approximately 15 years. It can be an option for patients with non-small cell lung cancer, the most common type of lung cancer. The technique is most successful in patients whose tumors are less than 6 centimeters in size, D'Amico said.

The researchers published the findings in the April 2007 issue of the *Annals of Thoracic Surgery*.



Contact your local WorldCare office if you are interested in obtaining a second opinion from a WorldCare Consortium hospital. Visit [www.WorldCare.com](http://www.WorldCare.com) for more information.