

## EYE BANKING

# A dire need for the blind

DR MANI LAI AICH LITU

Corneal blindness is a major form of visual deprivation in Bangladesh. There are about 100,000 corneal blind people in this country. A high percentage of these individuals could be visually rehabilitated by corneal transplantation—a procedure that has very high rate of success among organ transplants.

With this view we should move forward to strengthen eye banking capacity. The requirement of corneae in Bangladesh is approximately five lakhs. But the number of eyes being procured annually is only about 450-500 and these are not fully utilised. This clearly indicates a gap between the supply and demand of corneae in the country.

Sandhani International Eye Bank is the only active eye bank in our country. Corneal tissue collection by Sandhani has increased

remarkably during the last two years. But it alone cannot meet up the country's requirement for cornea.

Sandhani International Eye Bank adopted the standard eye banking systems in collaboration with ORBIS International which remarkably increased the number of corneas through the Hospital Cornea Retrieval Programme (HCRP). However, to meet the country's demand and increase the number of cornea collection, more eye banks are the need of time.

Eye banking procedure needs co-operation from both public and banking authority. Both way communications make the procedure smoother.

As soon as a death occurs at a house, family members can call up the eye bank informing the demise and their willingness to donate eyes.

Quality control and distribution are key to proper utilisation



of any cornea. Not only during the enucleation process (surgical removal of the whole eyeball) but even more after the eyes are brought to the eye bank for processing.

Corneal tissues may be distributed to ophthalmic institutions, corneal surgeons and other eye banks. The packing and transportation should be emphasised.

Sandhani International Eye

Bank has been distributing corneae at different hospitals according to the cornea distribution guideline.

With the increasing demand of cornea and their limited supply, it is imperative that the corneae received must be utilised to the maximum.

The writer is the Joint Secretary General of Sandhani National Eye Donation Society.

## OSTEOPOROSIS

# Prevent the silent killer

DR TAREQ SALAHUDDIN

As health-awareness is becoming an integral part of the modern lifestyle, bone-health has emerged as a key area of concern all over the world. Experts suggest that this is triggered by the fact that people, especially women, are increasingly suffering from different bone problems.

Among the bone problems, osteoporosis is a major public health problem. Lots of people suffer from this problem which is easily preventable.

**What is osteoporosis?** Osteoporosis, which means "porous bones," causes bones to become weak and brittle—so brittle that even mild stresses like bending over, lifting a vacuum cleaner or coughing can cause a fracture.

In most cases, bones weaken

After puberty, adequate calcium is a must for maintaining optimum bone-health.

No matter what your age, (if you can read this) bone health is important.

Owing to menstruation, childbirth, breastfeeding and menopause—women often suffer more from bone problems. But basic awareness from a young age can easily lead to adequate physical activity and calcium/mineral intake—which are the best ways to beat bone-problems later in life.

While this sounds very easy—the millions of women suffering from bone-problems around the globe testify to the contrary. Loss of bone strength and mass is a silent phenomenon—progressing unnoticeably as our bones turn fragile and brittle. It is often noticed only after a fracture occurs.

by the body for healthy bones, teeth, and proper function of the heart, muscles, and nerves. Every cell in your body needs calcium. Your bones store calcium—and when there is dearth of it, your body takes it from your bones. And that can make your bones weak.

The body cannot produce calcium; therefore, it must be absorbed through food. Good calcium sources include dairy products, dark-green leafy vegetables, orange juice, cereal, bread, nuts and beans.

While many doctors prescribe calcium-supplements today, dietary calcium remains the best source for this precious mineral.

There are some milk powder in the market for the adults which can meet the dietary need to keep our bones healthy. These formula milks contain high calcium non fat / low fat and

absorption from the gastrointestinal system and kidneys, thus making it available to body tissues and the blood.

**World osteoporosis day and its message**

To create mass awareness about osteoporosis, World Osteoporosis Day is marked worldwide. Yesterday was this year's World Osteoporosis Day.

The messages of the 2007 World Osteoporosis Day campaign include:

• In youth, adequate exercise and bone-healthy nutrition are essential to build peak bone mass and reduce the risk of later fracture later in life

• Certain lifestyle actions are harmful to bone health at all ages: smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, poor nutrition or low body weight (eg. anorexia), lack of exercise

• Take positive action by prac-

# Maternal mortality ratio falling too slowly to meet goal

STAR HEALTH REPORT

The world's maternal mortality ratio (the number of maternal deaths per 100 000 live births) is declining too slowly to meet Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5, which aims to reduce the number of women who die in pregnancy and childbirth by three-quarters by 2015.

While an annual decline of 5.5 percent in maternal mortality ratios between 1990 and 2015 is required to achieve MDG 5, figures released by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank show an annual decline of less than 1 percent. In 2005, 536 000 women

died of maternal causes, compared to 576 000 in 1990. 99 percent of these deaths occurred in developing countries.

The maternal mortality ratio in 2005 was highest in developing regions, with 450 maternal deaths per 100 000 live births, in stark contrast to nine in developed regions and 51 in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Moreover, the small drop in the global maternal mortality ratio reflects mainly the declines that have taken place in countries with relatively low levels of maternal mortality. Countries with the highest initial levels of mortality have made

virtually no progress over the past 15 years.

**Annual decline rate below target**

The new maternal mortality estimates that slightly more than one half of the maternal deaths (270 000) occurred in the sub-Saharan Africa region, followed by South Asia (188 000). Together, these two regions accounted for 86 percent of the world's maternal deaths in 2005.

Eleven countries accounted for almost 65 percent of global maternal deaths in 2005. India had the largest number (117 000), followed by Nigeria (59 000), the Democratic Republic of the

Congo (32 000) and Afghanistan (26 000).

**Indicator of death risk during pregnancy**

The maternal mortality ratio indicates the risk of death a woman faces with each pregnancy. In settings with high fertility, such as sub-Saharan Africa, women face this risk many times in their lifetime.

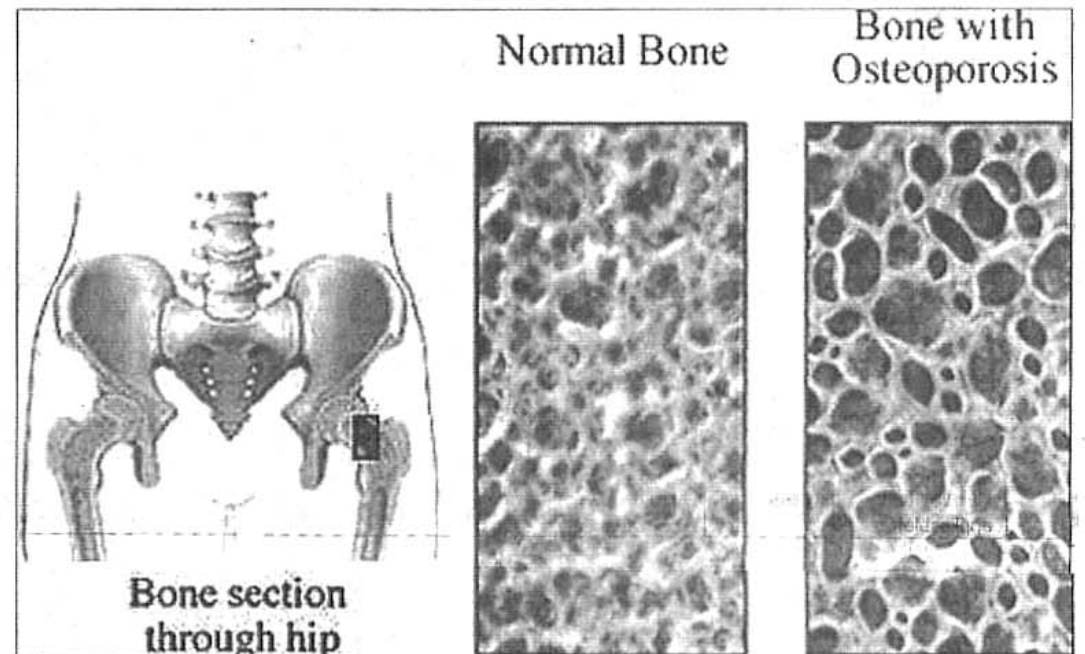
To achieve MDG 5 and reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters before 2015, improving health care for women and providing universal access to reproductive health services must be prioritised. This includes access to family planning, prevention of unplanned pregnancies and provision of high-quality pregnancy and delivery care, including emergency obstetric care.

However, health services can only help when women are able to make use of them. When obstetric emergencies arise during pregnancy and delivery, the importance of recognising danger signs and seeking care quickly is critical. Transportation must be available, and appropriately staffed and equipped facilities must be within reach. Increasing female education, improving gender equality, and strengthening empowerment for making decisions about seeking care are essential elements of strategies to reduce maternal mortality.

Source: Joint News Release WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank



**It is never too late — or too early — to do something about osteoporosis. Everyone can take steps to keep bones strong and healthy throughout life.**



when you have low levels of calcium, phosphorus and other minerals in your bones. Osteoporosis can also accompany endocrine disorders or result from excessive use of drugs such as corticosteroids.

**Common complications of osteoporosis**

A common result of osteoporosis is fractures—most of them in the spine, hip or wrist. Although it is often thought of as a women's disease, osteoporosis also affects a significant number of men. And compared with the number of women and men who have osteoporosis, many more have low bone density.

**What you need to know about your bones**

Bones are constantly built and broken down.

With age, less and less bones are built to replace what is broken down.

**Preventing osteoporosis**

It is never too late—or too early—to do something about osteoporosis. Everyone can take steps to keep bones strong and healthy throughout life.

Luckily, preserving bone-health often requires no extravagant diet, therapy, medication or treatment—but only basic awareness about our bones. For starters, it ought to be noted that bone is living tissue made up of specialised bone cells.

Like the rest of our bodies, it is constantly being broken down and renewed. In childhood, more bone is made than is broken down—approaching a balance by the end of puberty. From the mid-30s onwards, there is a mismatch between bone production and bone breakdown, resulting in a gradual decrease in bone strength and mass.

Calcium is a mineral needed

they are enriched with a superior combination of essential bone nutrients like Protein, Calcium, Magnesium, Zinc, and Vitamin D. Anlene is an example of such milk powder.

**Few steps to healthy bones**

**Eat Healthy:** Eat a healthy diet—plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables and whole grains. Avoid cigarette smoking and caffeine intake.

**Ensure calcium for your body:** Calcium is vital to building and maintaining strong, healthy bones and to aid functions of both muscle and the nervous system.

**Be active:** Regular weight-bearing exercises increase bone mass at all ages, stimulate bone growth and improve flexibility and co-ordination.

**Essential minerals / micro-nutrients:** Vitamin D and Magnesium help increase calcium

taking a bone-healthy lifestyle that includes weight-bearing exercise, calcium and vitamin-D rich nutrition

• Recognise whether you have passive risk factors (risk factors which you cannot change, but which you must be aware of such as family history of osteoporosis, prior fracture, thin build)

• Post-menopausal women should recognise that they are at greatest risk of osteoporosis and be especially aware of their personal risk and what questions to ask their physicians

• Men should be aware that they too are at risk of osteoporosis and that there are special considerations that should be recognised and acted upon

• People who have experienced fractures are at high risk of future fractures and need to be especially vigilant and take appropriate preventative action.

## Dental care tips

The dental experts have recognized the link between good oral health and sound nutrition. There is a growing concern among dentists that many of their patients are consuming record numbers of sugar-filled food, sweetened fruit drinks, and non-nutritious snack foods.

Eating patterns and food choices among children and teens are important factors that affect how quickly youngsters may develop tooth decay. When bacteria come into contact with sugar or starch in the mouth, acid is produced, which attacks the teeth for 20 minutes or more. This can eventually result in tooth decay.

The foods we choose generally affect our overall health, including our teeth and gums. The dietary guidelines encourage consumers to limit intake of beverages and foods high in added sugars that may crowd out other health foods

from the daily diet.

**What should we do?** • Maintain a healthy diet. Make sure water is readily available and drink water more often. Limit eating and drinking between meals. Give preference to nutritious foods for snacks.

• Avoid sticky sweets, such as taffies, toffees, soft candies and pastries. These types of foods stick to your teeth and feed decay-causing bacteria. When you do eat sweets, eat them after a meal. When candies are eaten alone, they are more likely to remain stuck between your teeth.

• Be aware that excessive amounts of coffee, tea, red wine and other beverages can stain your teeth.

• Brush your teeth every time after taking sweet food with fluoride toothpaste. If you can't brush your teeth after eating, rinse your mouth with water.

## FITNESS TIPS

# 10 myths on exercise

HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

Although some old fitness fictions, such as "no pain, no gain" and spot reducing are fading fast, plenty of popular exercise misconceptions still exist. Here are some of the most common myths as well as the not-so-common facts based on current exercise research.

**1. You will burn more fat if you exercise longer at a lower intensity**

The most important focus in exercise and fat weight control is not the percentage of exercise energy coming from fat but the total energy cost, or how many calories are burned during the activity. The faster you walk, step or run, for example, the more calories you use per minute. However, high-intensity exercise is difficult to sustain if you are just beginning or returning to exercise, so you may not exercise very long at this level. It is safer, and more practical, to start out at a lower intensity and work your way up gradually.

**2. If you are not going to**

**work out hard and often, exercise is a waste of time**

This kind of thinking keeps a lot of people from maintaining or even starting an exercise program. Research continues to show that any exercise is better than none. For example, regular walking or gardening for as little as an hour a week has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease.

**3. Yoga is a completely gentle and safe exercise**

Yoga is an excellent form of exercise, but some styles are quite rigorous and demanding both physically and mentally. As with any form of exercise, qualified, careful instruction is necessary for a safe, effective workout.

**4. If you exercise long and hard enough, you will always get the results you want**

In reality, genetics plays an important role in how people respond to exercise. Studies have shown a wide variation in how different exercisers respond to the same training program. Your development of strength, speed



and endurance may be very different from that of other people you know.

**5. Exercise is one sure way to lose all the weight you desire**

As with all responses to exercise,

weight gain or loss is impacted by many factors, including dietary intake and genetics. All individuals will not lose the same amount of weight on the same exercise program. It is possible to be

active and overweight. However, although exercise alone cannot guarantee your ideal weight, regular physical activity is one of the most important factors for successful long-term weight management.

**6. If you want to lose weight, stay away from strength training because you will bulk up**

Most exercise experts believe that cardiovascular exercise and strength training are both valuable for maintaining a healthy weight. Strength training helps maintain muscle mass and decrease body fat percentage.

**7. Water fitness programs are primarily for older people or exercisers with injuries**

Recent research has shown that water fitness programs can be highly challenging and effective for both improving fitness and losing weight. Even top athletes integrate water fitness workouts into their training programs.

**8. The health and fitness benefits of mind-body exercise are questionable**

In fact, research showing the benefits of these exercises continues to grow. Yoga has been shown to help treat low-back pain. Improved flexibility, balance, coordination, posture, strength and stress management are just some of the potential results of mind-body exercise.

**9. Overweight people are unlikely to benefit much from exercise**

Studies show that obese people who participate in regular exercise programs have a lower risk of all-cause mortality than sedentary individuals, regardless of weight. Both men and women of all sizes and fitness levels can improve their health with modest increases in activity.

**10. Home workouts are fine, but going to a gym is the best way to get fit**

Research has shown that some people find it easier to stick to a home-based fitness program. In spite of all the hype on trendy exercise programs and facilities, the best program for you is the one you will participate in consistently.