

Health Bulletin



Shriners Hospitals Focus On Genetic Disease As Part of U.S. Bone And Joint Decade

(NAPSA)—Shriners Hospitals for Children is taking strides to promote awareness of conditions of the bones, joints and muscles, with a focus on osteogenesis imperfecta (OI), a genetic disorder also called brittle bone disease.

Working together with organizations such as the Pediatric Orthopaedic Society of North America and the Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation, the Shriners Hospitals network is helping to promote the U.S. Bone and Joint Decade (USBJD) 2002-2011. Each hospital is involved in getting the word out about OI and the USBJD through activities, speakers and literature.

OI is characterized by bones that break easily, and often from little or no apparent cause. A person can break a leg while rolling over in their sleep, or break a rib while coughing. Some children are even born with multiple bone breaks. In the United States, there are between 20,000 and 50,000 people affected with OI.

Shriners Hospitals have been treating children with OI since the 1940s, and conducting research since the '60s. In recent years, developments in Shriners' OI research have allowed children, as well as adults with the disease, a chance at a better quality of life. The Shriners Hospitals network of 22 pediatric medical facilities includes eight hospitals specifically designated as OI centers for children.

At the Montreal Shriners Hospital, for instance, a study discovered that OI patients treated with an oral drug called Alendronate had a decrease in fractures and bone pain. At the same time, they had an increase in bone mass, making it easier to move around. Discoveries like these provide hope for many, including members of the Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation, which is made up of children and adults with OI and parents of children with OI.

"The quality of care at Shriners Hospitals for patients with OI is unprecedented," said Heller An Shapiro, executive director of the



Shriners Hospitals offers specialized treatment for children with bone, joint and muscle conditions.

Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation. "We refer many patients to Shriners Hospitals, and they, in turn, provide us with valuable information about OI."

The USBJD is a campaign aimed at raising awareness, seeking new treatments and educating the public on conditions of the bones, joints and muscles. Since its inception, Shriners Hospitals has been at the forefront of understanding musculoskeletal problems associated with childhood injuries and conditions. In 2002 alone, Shriners admitted more than 22,000 children for orthopaedic care.

Since the first Shriners Hospital opened in 1922, more than 700,000 children with orthopaedic problems and burn injuries have received some of the best medical care in the world. Shriners Hospitals provide care totally without charge to children up to their 18th birthday. The Shrine of North America, an international fraternity with approximately 485,000 members in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and the Republic of Panama, founded the hospital system.

If you know a child Shriners Hospitals might be able to help, call 1-800-237-5055 in the U.S.; 1-800-361-7256 in Canada; or visit www.shrinershq.org.