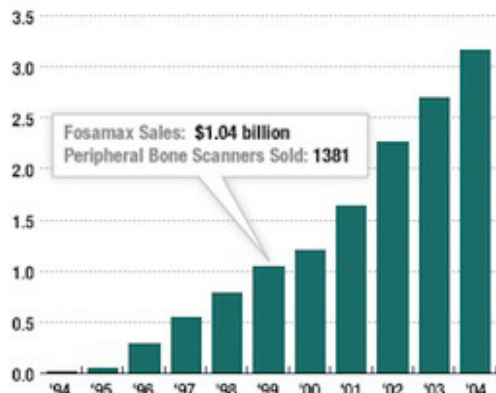


Warning! Don't Take Another Drug Until You Read How You're Being Conned...

Posted By [Dr. Mercola](#) |



Osteoporosis is a disease that causes bones to become thinner, more porous and break more easily. Osteopenia is different from osteoporosis -- it is a slight thinning of bones that occurs naturally as women get older and typically doesn't result in disabling bone breaks. Osteopenia is a condition that only recently started to be thought of as a problem that required treatment. Until the early 1990's, only a handful of people had even heard of the word. But osteopenia has transformed from a rarely heard word into a problem that millions of women swallow pills to treat.

The term "osteopenia" was never originally meant to be considered as a disease -- it was a research category used mostly because some thought it might be useful for public health researchers who like clear categories for their studies.

But in 1995, a man named Jeremy Allen was approached by the drug company Merck. The pharmaceutical giant had just released a new osteoporosis drug called Fosamax. Since osteoporosis is a serious problem that affects millions of women, the potential market for Fosamax was enormous. But the drug wasn't selling well.

Allen persuaded Merck to establish a nonprofit called the Bone Measurement Institute. On its board were six of the most respected osteoporosis researchers in the country.

But the institute itself had a rather slim staff: Allen was the only employee.

In 1997 the institute and several other interested organizations successfully lobbied to pass the Bone Mass Measurement Act, a piece of legislation that changed Medicare reimbursement rules to cover bone scans. More and more women got bone density tests (at Merck's urging), and the very existence of the word "osteopenia" on a medical report had a profound effect.

Millions of women were worried by the diagnosis. And when clinicians saw the word 'osteopenia' on a report, they assumed it was a disease. Merck did not disabuse them of the notion.

There are no long-term studies that look at what happens to women with osteopenia who start Fosamax in their 50's and continue treatment long-term in the hopes of preventing old-age fractures. And none are planned.

I don't believe for a minute that Merck's motivation for pushing the label "osteopenia" was to make it convenient for the researchers. It's very clear that Big Pharma has one overriding goal—a handsome sales report at the end of the quarter.

Since 2003, annual sales of osteoporosis drugs have about doubled to \$8.3 billion, and \$3 billion of that was from Fosamax alone.

Convincing you that you have a disease when you don't is nothing short of medical molestation. It's unethical, self-serving, and demonstrates the upside-down priorities of the pharmaceutical giants.

But it isn't surprising, I'm sorry to say.

as likelihood of falling, bone mass, body weight, and other variables.

What You Risk With Fosamax

Merck tried to hide the fact that Fosamax is causing jawbone death, a disease now known to oral surgeons as Bisphosphate-Related Osteonecrosis of the Jaw (BRONJ) or "Fossy Jaw," a nasty side effect of Fosamax and related drugs that is difficult to treat.

Essentially, the condition causes your jawbone to rot and decay—quite ironic considering the drugs are primarily taken by people looking to *strengthen their bones*.

In addition to BRONJ, bisphosphate drugs have also been associated with:

- **Serious eye inflammation and possible blindness**
- **Liver damage**
- **Atrial fibrillation**
- **Increased risk of ulcers**
- **Esophageal cancer**
- **Renal failure**
- **Skin reactions**
- **Hypocalcemia (blood calcium levels are too low)**

With a resume like this, it's not surprising that Merck may have intentionally tried to keep the side effects of Fosamax under wraps—what drug representative would want to share this information with potential clients?

Merck did the same thing with their tragically dangerous painkiller, Vioxx.