New European survey reveals women with post-menopausal osteoporosis fear stoop and shrinking in height

“What the Stoop!” campaign launches visual guide highlighting serious consequences of spinal fractures and warns that shrinking is not just due to old age

Wednesday 11th June 2008: According to a new European survey, women with post-menopausal osteoporosis are concerned about developing a stoop (commonly known as curvature of the spine or hyperkyphosis) and shrinking in height but accept that it is just part of getting old. The survey also found that almost three quarters (73%) of the women questioned would be very self-conscious if they developed a curved spine.

What many women don’t realize is that these problems are often due to osteoporosis, a progressive disease that commonly leads to height loss and often has serious consequences including spine deformity or stoop, if not effectively treated.

To help raise awareness of this condition, a new visual guide called “Stop the Stoop” has been launched today in conjunction with the International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF) and Professor Dieter Felsenberg, a world-leading expert on osteoporosis, which aims to draw attention to the serious implications for women with post-menopausal osteoporosis who do not take action to manage their condition effectively.

One such serious outcome is that 30-50% of women will suffer a fracture related to osteoporosis in their lifetime. Some of these women could experience multiple vertebral (spinal) fractures, which can result in significant height loss, and eventually a stoop as their condition progresses. Although progression of a stoop and height loss can be slowed down, or even avoided, with effective osteoporosis treatments, many women are still not taking their medicine properly, or are stopping treatment completely, for example, due to unwanted side-effects, leading them to be at increased risk of postural complications.

Professor Dieter Felsenberg, Director, Center for Muscle and Bone Research, Charité - University Medicine Berlin, Free & Humboldt-University Berlin, comments: “Due to the silent
nature of osteoporosis it can be difficult to tell if a treatment is working. Therefore it is essential that women with osteoporosis are aware of the important role that treatment plays from the beginning, and also over the longer-term, in preventing vertebral fractures and the devastating consequences these fractures can have.”

“The visual guide features a patient who is not taking appropriate treatment and has had eight vertebral fractures in a four year period. As a result, she may lose up to ten centimetres in height and may suffer severe chronic pain from the curvature of her spine. Unfortunately this is a reality for patients who do not actively manage their osteoporosis and the consequences can be potentially life-threatening in a relatively short period of time.”

Vertebral fractures are often “silent” and without any symptoms when they first occur, and can result from simple day-to-day activities, such as carrying heavy shopping bags or doing household chores. More than two-thirds of vertebral fractures are undetected with numerous repetitive fractures leading to severe disability and chronic pain.

The European survey of 622 women with post-menopausal osteoporosis found that height loss is feared by almost two thirds (64%) of respondents. In addition to the physical impact of a fracture, these women are concerned about how perceptions of them might change as a result of changes in their appearance caused by fracture. The survey found that a common perception of women with a curved spine is that they are ‘fragile’ and ‘vulnerable’, yet over one in five (21%) are unaware that not taking their treatment could result in the height loss and stoop they fear. Worryingly, 39% of women surveyed would not tell their doctor if they stopped taking their tablets, which could increase their risk of vertebral fracture.

Daniel Navid, Chief Executive Officer at the IOF, comments: “Women need to be aware that height loss and stoop caused by fractures often can be avoided if proper measures are taken to maintain strong bones after diagnosis of osteoporosis. By staying on appropriate treatment, people with osteoporosis can continue to lead an independent and active life.”

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The survey found that 65% of women, given the choice, would prefer to take tablets less frequently. Taking effective treatment is the best way for women with post-menopausal osteoporosis to protect their bones.

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About the Stop the Stoop survey
The Stop the Stoop survey conducted by Steel Magnolia was sponsored by Roche & GSK. A total of 622 post-menopausal women who are diagnosed with osteoporosis were interviewed across six European countries: France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, and UK. Interviews took place from 29 April to 13 May 2008.

Roche/GSK Collaboration
In December 2001, F Hoffmann-La Roche (Roche) and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) announced their plans to co-develop and co-promote ibandronate for the treatment and prevention of postmenopausal osteoporosis in a number of major markets, excluding Japan. The Roche/GSK collaboration provides expertise and commitment to bringing new osteoporosis therapies to market as quickly as possible.

About Roche
Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Roche is one of the world’s leading research-focused healthcare groups in the fields of pharmaceuticals and diagnostics. As the world’s biggest biotech company and an innovator of products and services for the early detection, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases, the Group contributes on a broad range of fronts to improving people’s health and quality of life. Roche is the world leader in in-vitro diagnostics and drugs for cancer and transplantation, a market leader in virology and active in other major therapeutic areas such as autoimmune diseases, inflammation, metabolic disorders and diseases of the central nervous system. In 2006 sales by the Pharmaceuticals Division totalled 33.3 billion Swiss francs, and the Diagnostics Division posted sales of 8.7 billion Swiss francs. Roche has R&D agreements and strategic alliances with numerous partners, including majority ownership interests in Genentech and Chugai, and invests approximately 7 billion Swiss francs a year in R&D. Worldwide,
the Group employs about 75,000 people. Additional information is available on the Internet at www.roche.com.

About GSK

GSK, one of the world’s leading research-based pharmaceutical and healthcare companies, is committed to improving the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer.

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Roche Healthkiosk, Osteoporosis: www.health-kiosk.ch/start_osteo.htm
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i Stop the Stoop survey, May 2008
v The Adherence Gap: Why osteoporosis patients don’t continue with treatment. A European report highlighting the gap between the beliefs of people with osteoporosis and the perceptions of their physicians. International Osteoporosis Foundation (sponsored by Roche & GSK). 2005