

Inside Story HIGHLIGHTS

From the Pacific Radiology Referrer Newsletter



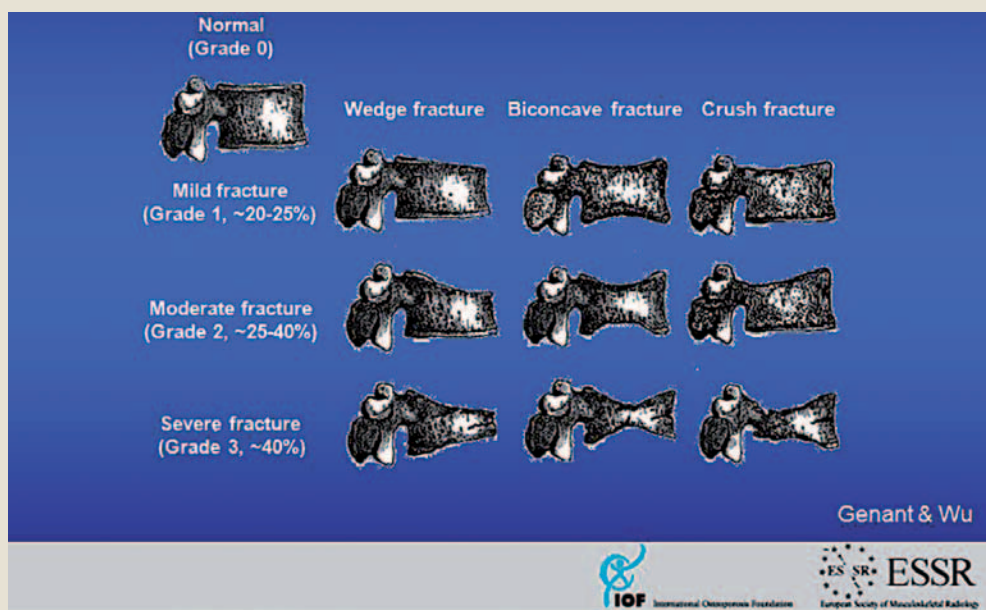
Pacific Radiology



DEXA Matters | VERTEBRAL FRACTURES



Mike Nowitz



Vertebral insufficiency fractures are common with a prevalence of 20% in Australian women and 25% in the USA (the incidence understandably increasing with age). They can cause pain, loss of mobility and height, respiratory and gastrointestinal symptoms.

The presence of a vertebral fracture confers an increased risk of further fractures – fivefold in the spine and double at the hip. Twenty percent of women will develop a second vertebral fracture within one year.

Worldwide a substantial percentage of these fractures go undiagnosed (by both radiologists and clinicians) with only 8% presenting clinically.

Effective treatment is available and can reduce the risk of further fracture by 30-65%.

Within a given patient the vertebrae should have a similar and continuous appearance. There may be variations in the appearance with slight wedging at T7-8 and at T12-L1, but the loss of vertebral height should be less than 20% and there should be no associated end plate changes or cortical deformity.

Loss of greater than 20% of vertebral height and end plate changes/cortical irregularity constitutes a fracture. These are classified by morphology and percentage loss of height.

Vertebral fractures need to be recognised and their clinical significance appreciated to prevent the fracture cascade and its associated morbidity.

As always your feedback is most welcome.

~ Mike Nowitz