

The Bone and Joint Decade 2000-2010: For Prevention and Treatment of Musculoskeletal Disease

I Y Y Tsou,*^{MBBS, FRCR (UK)}, H H Chng,**^{FAMS, MBBS, M Med (Int Med)}

Abstract

The Bone and Joint Decade 2000-2010 has been established to increase awareness of the scale and impact of musculoskeletal disorders on the individual, health care systems and the society. It is a multi-disciplinary initiative involving professional bodies, patient care groups, research organisations and the community.

Ann Acad Med Singapore 2002; 31:69-70

Key words: Awareness, Education, Initiative, International

The theme of this issue of the Annals, Academy of Medicine at the beginning of the year is suitably on osteoporosis. Osteoporosis, with its multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary approach, has been identified as one of the four clinical fields selected also for emphasis by the Bone and Joint Decade initiative. The articles in this issue also contribute to the increasing knowledge of osteoporosis, and to musculoskeletal diseases in general.

Introduction

Worldwide, musculoskeletal conditions are the most common causes of severe long-term pain and physical disability, affecting large numbers of people. A precedence was seen with the success in declaring 1990-2000 as the Decade of the Brain. It has raised awareness of the impact of brain disorders and led to significant scientific advances. At a national level, the infrastructure and funding in various fields of brain research have greatly improved. In a similar fashion, the concept for the Bone and Joint Decade was formulated and outlined.

The extent of the problem of musculoskeletal disorders and its burden on patients and society can be appreciated from the following examples:

1. Joint diseases account for half of all chronic conditions in persons aged 65 years and above.
2. Back pain is the second leading cause of sick leave.
3. Fractures related to osteoporosis have almost doubled in number in the last decade; it is estimated that 40% of all women over 50 years in age will suffer from an osteoporotic fracture.

4. The severe injuries caused by traffic accidents and war produce a tremendous demand for preventive and restorative help. It is anticipated that 25% of health expenditure of developing countries will be spent on trauma-related care by the year 2010.

The impact from such bone and joint disorders on the individual, the society and health care and social systems led to an initiative which started with an inaugural consensus meeting held in Lund, Sweden in April 1998 and culminating in a proposal for the Decade of the Bone and Joint from 2000 to 2010.

The Bone and Joint Decade aims to raise awareness of the suffering and cost to society associated with musculoskeletal disorders such as joint diseases, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, rheumatic arthritis, low back pain, spinal disorders, severe trauma to the extremities and crippling diseases and deformities in children. The initiative also aims to reduce the prevalence of such diseases and to advance therapy through research.

No single organisation alone can accomplish the desired benefits for the patient. The Bone and Joint Decade is a multi-disciplinary initiative involving everyone concerned with the care of bone and joint disorders including communities, patients, health care providers and researchers.

In Singapore, a National Action Network was formed in later 2000, and the first meeting which it formally supported was from 16 to 18 February 2001. The initial organisations involved include the Singapore Orthopaedic Association, Singapore Society of Immunology, Allergy and Rheuma-

* Secretary, National Action Network – Singapore, Bone and Joint Decade Registrar, Department of Diagnostic Radiology, Tan Tock Seng Hospital

** National Co-ordinator, National Action Network – Singapore Bone and Joint Decade

Head and Senior Consultant, Department of Rheumatology, Allergy and Immunology, Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Address for Reprints: Dr Ian Y Y Tsou, Department of Diagnostic Radiology, Tan Tock Seng Hospital, 11 Jalan Tan Tock Seng, Singapore 308433.

tology, Sports Medicine Association of Singapore, Singapore Radiological Society, Singapore Physiotherapy Association and the Asian Musculoskeletal Society. In the coming year, we hope to include more professional and patient groups in this initiative.

Goals of the Bone and Joint Decade

The goals of the Decade will be achieved by:

1. raising awareness of the growing burden of musculoskeletal disorders on society.
2. empowering patients to participate in their own care.
3. promoting cost-effective prevention and treatment.
4. advancing understanding of musculoskeletal disorders through research to improve prevention and treatment.

Events

This initiative began with an inaugural consensus meeting in Lund, Sweden in April 1998 and launched at an international forum in 1999, with co-ordinated announcements made globally.

A series of consensus documents were prepared at this inaugural meeting, based on papers by experts in each of the following four chosen topics—joint diseases, back pain, osteoporosis and severe trauma to the extremities. The agreed and edited versions were published,¹ and they provide valuable outlines for the four clinical fields that had been selected, and an indication of the potential for advance in other musculoskeletal conditions. The common features in all four reports are: what can be presently achieved, the need for research and advancement, the conviction that this would probably be cost-effective in the future, and an awareness of the very wide differences in standards and needs throughout the world. These consensus documents and their contents have been highlighted in various medical journals, in different clinical disciplines.²⁻⁹

The aims and objectives of the Bone and Joint Decade were agreed at the end of the inaugural consensus meeting. Endorsement has been sought from a wide variety of stakeholders. An administrative structure has been established. There is a Steering Committee which is representative of different geographical regions and disciplines. Its role is to direct and co-ordinate the endorsement, launch and activities of the Decade. One of the initial activities will be a health needs assessment for musculoskeletal disorders. There are national co-ordinators and co-ordinating groups representing the various stakeholders at a national level who will be responsible for national activities. All the organisations joining the initiative will be represented on its Board. The initiative also has the support of Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank.

The last Annual Bone and Joint Decade Network Meeting

was held on 27 November 2000 in the Sultanate of Oman. The theme of the meeting was “Synergy—How to Work Together”. Impressive progress has been made in many countries in the past year. Through discussion on synergy and strategy and by sharing of experience, the participants gained new ideas for their continued work.

A dedicated action week is planned for each year in October, where there will be co-ordinated events and activities for education and increased awareness. In Singapore, a public forum as well as a nursing symposium was held on consecutive weekends in October, with the basic theme of “Aches and Pains”. The speakers were from various disciplines such as orthopaedics, rheumatology, radiology, sports medicine, as well as paraclinical services including physiotherapy and occupational therapy. More than 250 members of the public attended the public forum, and about 150 nursing and hospital staff were at the nursing symposium. Both groups benefited from knowing more about musculoskeletal disorders and, in particular, the sessions on ergonomics at the work place and in hospital were well received.

As of October 2001, 84 countries have established national co-ordinators. In 49 countries, including Singapore, national action networks with participants from various professional and patients’ musculoskeletal organisations are now creating their own goals and agendas. Worldwide, 37 countries have officially endorsed the Bone and Joint Decade.

The national action network in Singapore looks forward to contributing to this initiative, both locally as well as internationally. More information can be found at the Bone and Joint Decade website at:

<http://www.boneandjointdecade.org>

REFERENCES

1. The Bone and Joint Decade 2000-2010 for prevention and treatment of musculoskeletal disorders. Lund, Sweden, April 17-18, 1998. Proceedings. *Acta Orthop Scand Suppl* 1998; 281:1-86.
2. Brooks P M, Hart J A L. The Bone and Joint Decade: 2000-2010. *Med J Aust* 2000; 172:307-8.
3. Hazes J M, Woolf A D. The Bone and Joint Decade 2000-2010. *J Rheumatol* 2000; 27:1-3.
4. Delmas P D, Anderson M. Launch of the Bone and Joint Decade 2000-2010. *Osteoporos Int* 2000; 11:95-7.
5. Weinstein S L. 2000-2010: The Bone and Joint Decade. *J Bone J Surg Am* 2000; 82A:1-3.
6. Horan F. The Bone and Joint Decade—2000 to 2010. *J Bone J Surg Br* 1999; 81B:377.
7. Garfin S, Andersson G, Grönblad M, Rydevik B. The Bone and Joint Decade, 2000-2010, for prevention and treatment of musculoskeletal disorders. *Spine* 1999; 24:1055-6.
8. Drezner M K. Decade of the Bone and Joint. *J Bone Miner Res* 1999; 14:2.
9. Connolly J F. The next 10 years—the Bone and Joint Decade. *Clin Orthop* 1999; 358:255-6.