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Part Two

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF BONE HEALTH IN AMERICA?

To provide an answer to this question, this part of the report describes the magnitude and scope of the problem from two perspectives. The first is the prevalence of bone disease within the population at large, and the second is the burden that bone diseases impose on society and those who suffer from them.

Chapter 4 provides detailed information on the incidence and prevalence of osteoporosis, fractures, and other bone diseases. Osteoporosis is by far the most common bone disease, although other related bone diseases are important as well. Where available, the chapter also provides data on bone disease in men and minorities. While older White women are clearly at risk, bone disease can strike anyone, at any age, including men, premenopausal women, and ethnic minorities. Chapter 4 also offers some chilling projections for the future prevalence of bone disease, citing forecasts of significant increases in the prevalence of both osteoporosis and fractures, and a steep rise in the costs of caring for bone disease.

Chapter 5 examines the costs of bone diseases and their effects on well-being and quality of life both from the point of view of the individual patient and society at large. While bone disease seldom leads directly to death, it can start a downward spiral in physical and mental health that has a dramatic impact on an individual's functional status and quality of life. All too often this downward spiral concludes with premature death. To illustrate the burden of bone diseases, the chapter includes real-life vignettes that describe the terrible impact that osteoporosis, Paget's disease, osteogenesis imperfecta, and other related bone diseases can have on those who suffer from them and their family members.