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Disuse osteopenia: The short- and long-term effects of post-traumatic and post-surgical immobilisation following lower limb injury or total knee replacement.

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Disuse osteopenia: The short- and long-term effects of post-traumatic and post-surgical immobilisation following lower limb injury or total knee replacement.

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by

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ABSTRACT

Low trauma hip fractures, due to bone fragility, are a major healthcare burden with serious consequences for individuals in terms of long-term morbidity and mortality; and also for society due to the high medical and care costs associated with these injuries. Because of the association with low bone mass, these fractures are particularly prevalent in elderly populations and are likely to become more common as longevity increases globally. Avoidance of these fractures is therefore an extremely important goal.

Low bone mass, manifested in the conditions of osteopenia and osteoporosis, is the primary cause of bone fragility, and reductions in bone mass are the inevitable corollary of aging and menopause. Bone loss may be exacerbated by immobilisation and reduced weight-bearing activity, giving rise to the condition of disuse osteopenia. Immobilisation may itself be the result of low trauma leg fragility fractures that potentially causes further bone density loss. If this loss occurs at the hip, there is an increased risk for hip fracture as a sequela to the original injury. Osteoarthritis is also a condition strongly associated with aging that may necessitate knee arthroplasty as a last stage treatment, potentially causing a period of reduced mobility and weight-bearing activity following surgery. Leg fracture and knee replacement both present additional risk factors for hip fracture due to changes in muscle mass, gait and postural stability that may increase the risk of falls.

This study aims primarily to investigate the effects of immobilisation on leg fracture and knee replacement patients, immediately following injury or surgery, in order to quantify bone and muscle loss and to monitor recovery over a one year period. A
postmenopausal population were studied as they are already losing bone density systemically and may be at greater risk of further bone loss following immobilisation. Factors of activity, function, weight-bearing, pain, treatments, therapies, health perceptions and mental wellbeing, that potentially contribute to bone loss and recovery, were also investigated. Results from the study may provide information relating to increased future hip fracture risk and lead to treatment options to alleviate bone loss in these groups.
LIST OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.................................................................................................................. 2

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.............................................................................................. 9

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS............................................................................................ 11

LIST OF TABLES.......................................................................................................... 12

LIST OF FIGURES......................................................................................................... 16

ABBREVIATIONS.......................................................................................................... 20

SYMBOLS..................................................................................................................... 23

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION...................................................................................... 24

1.1 MOTIVATION FOR STUDY..................................................................................... 24

1.2 BONE ANATOMY.................................................................................................. 26

1.2.1 SKELETAL ANATOMY AND FUNCTION......................................................... 26

1.2.2 STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION OF BONE.............................................. 29

1.3 BONE HEALTH AND MAINTENANCE.................................................................. 34

1.3.1 REMODELLING ............................................................................................... 34

1.3.2 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO BONE HEALTH AND QUALITY.................. 37

1.3.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEPRESSION, PAIN AND BONE HEALTH.......... 43

1.4 MECHANICAL PROPERTIES OF BONE AND FRACTURE RISK......................... 44

1.4.1 MECHANISMS OF FAILURE ......................................................................... 44

1.4.2 MATERIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF BONE ................................................. 49

1.4.3 GEOMETRIC CHARACTERISTICS OF BONES ......................................... 51

1.4.4 CLINICAL PREDICTION OF FRACTURE AND FACTORS RELATING TO FRACTURE RISK .......................................................................................................................... 57

1.4.5 FRACTURE REPAIR AND COMPLICATIONS.................................................. 59

1.5 BONE DISEASES AND DISORDERS...................................................................... 60

1.5.1 OSTEOPOROSIS AND OSTEOPENIA............................................................... 60

1.5.2 OSTEOARTHRITIS.......................................................................................... 67

1.6 IMAGING TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION OF BONE AND SOFT TISSUE ................................................................................................................. 70

1.6.1 DXA .................................................................................................................. 71

1.6.2 MRI .................................................................................................................. 75

1.7 AIMS OF THESIS................................................................................................... 77
CHAPTER 2. MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY ........................................... 80

2.1 PARTICIPANTS .................................................................................. 80
   2.1.1 PARTICIPANT GROUPS ................................................................. 81
   2.1.2 INCLUSION CRITERIA ............................................................... 82
   2.1.3 EXCLUSION CRITERIA ............................................................. 83
   2.1.4 RECRUITMENT ..................................................................... 84
   2.1.5 RESPONSE RATES ............................................................... 85
   2.1.6 RETENTION RATES ............................................................... 89

2.2 METHOD ........................................................................................... 91
   2.2.1 PRELIMINARY ADMINISTRATION ........................................... 91
   2.2.2 DATA COLLECTION SCHEDULE ............................................. 92
   2.2.3 SCREENING AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES AT VISIT 1 ........................................................................... 92
   2.2.4 SCREENING AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES AT VISITS 2, 3&4 ................................................................. 100
   2.2.5 COMPLETION ADMINISTRATION ........................................... 101
   2.2.6 SAFETY & ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .................................. 102

2.3 DATA ANALYSIS & STATISTICS ....................................................... 105
   2.3.1 ANALYSIS OF DXA SCANS .................................................... 106
   2.3.2 ANALYSIS OF MRI SCANS ..................................................... 109
   2.3.3 ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRES ......................................... 111
   2.3.4 STATISTICAL METHODS .......................................................... 112

CHAPTER 3. EVALUATION OF A DUAL-SCALES METHOD TO MEASURE
WEIGHT-BEARING THROUGH THE LEGS, AND EFFECTS OF WEIGHT-
BEARING INEQUALITIES ON HIP BONE MINERAL DENSITY AND LEG LEAN
TISSUE MASS ......................................................................................... 114

3.1 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................. 114
3.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES ............................................................... 115
3.3 METHODS & STATISTICS ............................................................. 116
   3.3.1 PARTICIPANTS ..................................................................... 116
   3.3.2 METHODS ............................................................................. 116
   3.3.3 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS ....................................................... 119
3.4 RESULTS ......................................................................................... 119
3.5 DISCUSSION ................................................................................. 120
3.6 CONCLUSION ................................................................................. 124
CHAPTER 7. RESULTS – MENTAL WELLBEING AND ASSOCIATIONS WITH PARAMETERS OF FUNCTIONAL RECOVERY AND BONE QUALITY

7.1 INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

7.2 OBJECTIVES

7.3 BRIEF METHODS AND STATISTICS

7.4 RESULTS

7.4.1 DESCRIPTIVES

7.4.2 CHANGES IN DEPRESSION SCORES OVER 1 YEAR - PHQ-9

7.4.3 CHANGES IN ANXIETY SCORES OVER 1 YEAR - GAD-7

7.4.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEPRESSION AND PARAMETERS OF PHYSICAL AND FUNCTIONAL RECOVERY

7.4.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BONE LOSS AND DEPRESSION

7.4.6 SUBGROUP ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANTS WITH CLINICAL LEVELS OF DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

7.5 DISCUSSION

7.6 CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 8. SUMMARY
APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Recruitment poster – Patient groups ........................................... 275
Appendix 2. Recruitment leaflet – Patient groups ........................................... 276
Appendix 3. Information sheet ........................................................................ 277
Appendix 4. Invitation to participate in study – patient groups............................ 281
Appendix 5. Recruitment poster – Controls ..................................................... 282
Appendix 6. Recruitment leaflet – Controls ..................................................... 283
Appendix 7. Recruitment poster – Fracture > 1 year group ............................... 284
Appendix 8. Recruitment leaflet – Fracture > 1 year group ............................... 285
Appendix 9. MRI Participant Safety Checklist .................................................. 286
Appendix 10. Bone Questionnaire ................................................................. 288
Appendix 11. Lower Extremity Functional Scale (LEFS) .................................... 295
Appendix 12. Quality of Life Questionnaire (EQ-5D) ........................................ 296
Appendix 13. Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) ........................................ 300
Appendix 14. Anxiety Questionnaire (GAD-7) ................................................ 306
Appendix 15. International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) .................... 309
Appendix 16. Risk and Benefit Assessment .................................................... 312
Appendix 17. Activity monitor instructions ..................................................... 317
Appendix 18. Immobilization record .............................................................. 318
Appendix 19. Treatment and falls record ........................................................ 319
Appendix 20. Mood Disorders Centre protocol for assessing and reporting risk .... 321
Appendix 21. Example of the DXA output ...................................................... 327
Appendix 22. Trabecular Bone Score (TBS) report example ............................. 330

REFERENCES ................................................................................................... 331