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Examining the Interaction Between Calcium Supplement Use, Demographics, and Lifestyle Factors in Postmenopausal Bone Health

Vix Talbot

Portland State University

Examining the Interaction Between Calcium Supplement Use, Demographics, and Lifestyle Factors in Postmenopausal Bone Health

by Vix Talbot

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Dr. William Harry York,

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**Abstract**

The menopause transition is associated with significant changes in bone health, making it a critical period for interventions aimed at preserving bone mineral density (BMD) and reducing the risk of osteoporotic fractures. Calcium supplementation has been proposed as a potential strategy to mitigate BMD loss during this period; however, the efficacy of calcium supplementation may vary depending on individual demographic and lifestyle factors. In this study, we aimed to investigate specific demographic and lifestyle factors that modify the association between calcium supplement use and BMD loss during the menopause transition. Data were obtained from the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation (SWAN), a longitudinal cohort study comprising a multiethnic sample of midlife women. BMD measurements at various skeletal sites were obtained using dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA), and information on calcium supplement use, demographic characteristics, and lifestyle factors was collected via standardized questionnaires. Regression analysis was employed to assess the relationship between calcium supplement use and BMD loss, while controlling for potential confounders and examining effect modification by demographic and lifestyle factors. Our findings suggest that specific demographic and lifestyle factors, such as age, ethnicity, dietary habits, physical activity levels, and hormonal status, may significantly modify the association between calcium supplement use and BMD loss during the menopause transition. These findings have important implications for personalized strategies aimed at optimizing bone health in postmenopausal women, highlighting the need for tailored interventions based on individual characteristics. Further research is warranted to elucidate the underlying mechanisms driving these observed interactions and to develop targeted approaches for preventing osteoporotic fractures in this population.

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Introduction:

This paper uses data obtained from the SWAN data set.

The Study of Women’s Health Across the Nation (SWAN) is a multi-site longitudinal epidemiological study designed to investigate the health of women during their middle years. It is sponsored by the National Institute on Aging ( NIA), the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Office of Research on Women's Health, and the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. Data date back as far as 1994, and in 1997 the study grew to 3,0302 total participants. This study is representative of five different racial/ethnic backgrounds and has varied backgrounds and cultures. <paraphrased from <https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/ICPSR/series/00253>>

Osteoporosis, characterized by decreased bone density and increased susceptibility to fractures, poses a significant public health concern, particularly among postmenopausal women. The menopause transition is a critical period in a woman's life marked by significant hormonal changes, leading to accelerated bone loss and heightened fracture risk. Bones break when the force exerted on them exceeds their strength. The load-bearing capacity of bones becomes compromised when the rate of bone resorption exceeds that of bone formation, resulting in a progressive decline in bone mineral density (BMD) and structural integrity. “SWAN established that there is a rapid phase of bone loss in a 3-year period around the final menstrual period (FMP); BMD begins to decline around 1 year prior to the FMP, and continues to decrease in early postmenopause, with a slight reduction in loss rate around 2 years after the FMP” (Bone Health during the Menopause Transition and Beyond**)**

Calcium supplementation has emerged as a promising strategy for abating BMD decline during this transitional phase. However, the efficacy of calcium supplementation appears to be contingent upon various individual factors, including demographic characteristics and lifestyle habits. Studies have indicated that calcium intake beyond five years post-menopause can help mitigate bone loss, whereas its impact within the initial five years post-menopause appears to be negligible (Lanham-New, 2008).

This study seeks to compare existing research to new statistical models built to include additional demographic and lifestyle predictors from the SWAN data set to ascertain if those factors have any impact upon BMD loss during the menopause transition.

Research Question:

Are there specific demographic or lifestyle factors that modify the association between calcium supplement use and bone mineral density loss during the menopause transition?

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