

India needs to rapidly improve diagnosis and treatment of Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is growing worldwide and its rate of growth is alarmingly high in India. Research undertaken by a group from the University of Birmingham, UK suggests that complications of diabetes such as eye and kidney disease are particularly high in India compared to south-asian populations in Mauritius and the UK, possibility reflecting inadequate diagnosis of treatment of diabetic sufferers in India.

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Type 2 diabetes mellitus is a growing problem worldwide. The World Health Organisation estimates that 300 million people will be affected by 2025. India has the highest rate of diabetes in the world and Indians are particularly known to be at risk of developing the disease. Type 2 diabetes can cause complications such as eye disease, kidney disease, heart disease and stroke. These complications vary worldwide and in particular eye and kidney diseases are can be controlled by good diabetic treatment.

A group of researchers from the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, compared the prevalence of diabetic complications by surveying patients of south-asian origin in diabetic clinics in the UK, Mauritius and India.

'Our research will compare people with similar genetic make-up but undergoing quite different treatment for their diabetes in India, UK and Mauritius.' says Yanish Purmah a medical student at the University of Birmingham.

Interestingly, eye and kidney diseases were higher in India but heart disease and stroke were higher in south-asian people in the UK and Mauritius than in India.

'We found the prevalence of eye and kidney disease to be 8-10 times higher in India compared to the UK' - Mohammad Dowlut, student and researcher at the University of Birmingham, who presented his research on obesity at a leading international conference in Toronto recently.

Medicines used to currently treat Type 2 diabetes such as Metformin, Sulphonylureas and Insulin are more commonly used the UK and Mauritius compared to India. Moreover, the values of a blood test, which can tell how good a person's diabetic control has been, known in the medical world as HbA1C were much higher in India compared to UK.

'The fact that these anti-diabetic medicines are used more often in the UK and the lower HbA1C levels suggest that Type 2 Diabetes is better treated in the UK compared to India' - says Nilesh Sewpaul a final year medical student at the University of Birmingham.

The researchers suggest that eye and kidney disease are more common in diabetics in India because of poorer diabetic control and late diagnosis of disease by which time complications such as eye and kidney disease have already developed.

'Eye and Kidney disease are more common in India because people don't seem to see their doctor until they suffer serious symptoms by which time it is too late to stop these complications' warns Rahul Potluri of the University of Birmingham.

The UK has developed healthcare guidelines in the treatment of diabetes to optimise diabetic control and minimise complications amongst all its diabetic population. The researchers suggest that further diabetic research amongst its population and the formulation of clinical guidelines as well as patient education are major healthcare challenges for modern India in the back-drop of a rapidly growing diabetes problem.

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For more information, Please contact:

Ben Hill

University of Birmingham Press Officer - University of Birmingham

00441214146680

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