

Effects, management and impact of diabetes among the Lebanese community in Sydney metropolitan area

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Background: Diabetes is a global health concern which is known to be more prevalent among certain cultural and ethnic groups. While genetics may be a contributing factor, the higher incidence or difficulties in managing the disease may be attributable to cultural habits over generations. Studies have found the prevalence of diabetes among the Middle Eastern community is unusually high; however there is lack of information on prevalence of diabetes among Lebanese community in Australia. The aim of this study is to examine the effects of diabetes, its effective management and impact on this community.

Methods: A quantitative method was used. A total 200 Lebanese migrants living in Sydney metropolitan area (SMA) who had been diagnosed with diabetes mellitus at least six months prior to the study, recruited purposively from SMA surgeries serving primary the Lebanese residential communities. The study was based on a questionnaire that comprised of questions regarding background information, health, diagnosis and treatment of diabetes, lifestyle, quality of life, and management and emotion well being of participant. Management of diabetes was measured using the Patient Activation Measurement (PAM) scale. Four stages of management activation were identified from 13 questions in PAM: 1. Understanding their role and responsibility and Active role in taking care of own health, 2. Understanding about recommended health regimes 3. Confident in preventing and reducing further health problems 4. Adopting new behaviour.

Results: The results show that the mean age of the participants is 48 years, the majority are male (78%) and are married (94%). More than a third had formal education and less than half are employed at the time of the study. Over a third of the participants' have complaints of impeded mobility, less than half struggled with personal care and hygienic issues, and 74% experienced difficulties at work. Moreover, diabetes incapacitates 80% of those attempting to do household chores and more than 75% experienced pain and discomfort and 73.5% endure bouts of anxiety and depression due to diabetes. The t test results showed that males are more likely to follow a medical plan than their female counterpart, while ANOVA showed that the middle aged participants are significantly more confident in following the medication plan compared to the young and older cohort, both results were significant at $p < 0.05$.

Conclusion: The results of the present study suggest that diabetes affects both physical and emotional health of the participants of the study. An effective and focused diabetic education tailored to women, young and older cohorts seems necessary to improve their understanding of treatment regimes, hence enhancing effective management of diabetes. As individuals with diabetes may experience considerable anxiety and stress as they attempt to manage their disease, additional studies may be necessary to determine an effective approach, incorporating the emotional effects on individuals with diabetes, as the perceived causes may not relate entirely to this populations' disease status but rather incorporate their lifestyle and social-economic situation.

Biography

Wissam Mustapha is a Ph.D candidate from the University of Sydney, Faculty of Health Sciences. He has been working on this project as part of his PhD thesis for the last two years. He has a medical background, and currently working as a part-time tutor/lecturer at various universities including University of Sydney and University of Technology Sydney. He also works part time in a GP clinic.

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