Diabetes. Beware the silent assassin.

A report from Diabetes UK, October 2008
Diabetes. Beware the silent assassin.
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Introduction

Diabetes is one of the biggest health challenges facing the UK today. Recent estimates show that 10 per cent of NHS spending goes on diabetes – that’s £9 billion a year or £1 million an hour. There are currently 2.3 million people diagnosed with the condition and more than 500,000 who have Type 2 diabetes but are not aware of it.

It is estimated that by 2025 there will be more than four million people with diabetes in the UK. Most of these cases will be Type 2 diabetes, attributable to an ageing population and rapidly rising numbers of overweight and obese people. It is frightening to think that an increasingly unhealthy lifestyle has been a major factor in Type 2 diabetes, once seen only in the over-40s, being diagnosed in a growing number of younger people and even children.

Both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes are serious. They can lead to heart disease, strokes, amputations, kidney failure and blindness. Many people still don’t associate diabetes with these devastating complications and many still don’t realise that their weight and lifestyle could put them at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

Diabetes really is a silent assassin. Type 2 diabetes can remain undetected for ten years or more and 50 per cent of people show signs of complications when diagnosed. Not knowing that both types of diabetes must be managed effectively once identified increases the risk of serious short and long-term health problems. Shockingly, diabetes causes more deaths than breast and prostate cancer combined.

The costs to people’s quality of life, the economy, society, and the NHS are already high and they will keep on rising. We need to act now to raise awareness of diabetes and its complications. We must encourage people to follow a healthy diet and an active lifestyle in order to cut down the number of people with Type 2 diabetes.

Finally, early diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes is crucial, as is good diabetes management, if we want to prevent hundreds of thousands of people from developing the various complications of the condition and facing a future of ill health.

This is why Diabetes UK is launching the Silent Assassin campaign. We want to highlight that diabetes is a serious condition, improve awareness of its devastating complications and encourage people at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes to make urgent changes in their lifestyle. Heightening awareness of the seriousness of diabetes will support people with both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes to reduce their risk of developing serious complications.

The silent assassin, together we can beat it.

Douglas Smallwood, Diabetes UK Chief Executive
October 2008
Beware the silent assassin

The diabetes explosion

There are 2.3 million people diagnosed with diabetes in the UK \(^1\). Approximately two million of these have Type 2 diabetes and more than 250,000 are diagnosed with Type 1. In addition, there are more than 500,000 who have Type 2 diabetes but are not aware of it.

Currently 300 people in the UK are diagnosed with diabetes every day, that’s one person every five minutes.\(^2\)

It is estimated that by 2025, there will be more than four million people with diabetes in the UK.\(^3\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Number of people diagnosed with diabetes</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>1,961,976</td>
<td>3.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>56,924</td>
<td>3.14 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>210,000</td>
<td>4.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>131,119</td>
<td>4.21 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK total</td>
<td>2.3 million</td>
<td>3.66 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The short term complications of diabetes

One of the most common short-term complications of diabetes is hypoglycaemia, which can lead to unconsciousness. In addition, some people with Type 1 diabetes will develop diabetic ketoacidosis, which can lead to a coma and even death if left untreated.

The long-term impact of diabetes

Without good diabetes management, Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes can lead to heart disease, stroke, amputations, kidney failure and blindness. Diabetes really is a silent assassin. Type 2 diabetes can remain undetected for ten years or more\(^4\) and 50 per cent of people show signs of life-shattering complications when diagnosed.\(^4\) Not knowing that both types of diabetes must be managed effectively once identified increases the risk of serious health problems. The long-term complications of both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes include:

Heart disease and stroke
  • 80 per cent of people with diabetes will die from cardiovascular complications.\(^4\)

Kidney disease
  • Diabetes is now the leading cause of end stage renal failure.\(^4\)

Eye disease
  • Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in people of working age in the UK.\(^4\)
  • People with diabetes are up to 20 times more likely to go blind than people without diabetes. \(^4\)
Amputations
- 100 people a week in the UK have a limb amputated as a result of diabetes.\(^{(5)}\)
- The rate of lower limb amputation in people with diabetes is 15 times higher than in people without diabetes.\(^{(4)}\)
- 70 per cent of people die within five years of having an amputation as a result of diabetes.\(^{(6)}\)

Mortality rates
- More than one in ten (11.6 per cent) deaths among 20 to 79 year-olds in England can be attributed to diabetes.\(^{(7)}\)
- If current trends continue, one in eight (12.2 per cent) deaths among 20 to 79-year-olds will be attributable to the condition by 2010.
- Diabetes causes more deaths than breast and prostate cancer combined.\(^{(8)}\)
- Life expectancy is reduced on average by 20 years in those with Type 1 diabetes and up to ten years in Type 2 diabetes.\(^{(4)}\)
- In many cases death certificates often fail to take into account diabetes as an underlying cause of death.

Hospital admissions and the cost of diabetes
- One in ten people in hospital have diabetes and 60 per cent of inpatients with diabetes have been admitted as emergencies.\(^{(9)}\)
- People with diabetes are twice as likely to be admitted to hospital.\(^{(9)}\)
- Inpatients with diabetes stay in hospital longer, whatever the cause of admission.\(^{(9)}\)
- Diabetes UK estimates that people with diabetes spend 1.1 million days in hospital a year. The hospital stay for a person with diabetes is likely to be up to twice the average: the hospital stay for a person with diabetes is normally 11 days.\(^{(4)}\)
- 20 per cent of people with diabetes in hospital have already been hospitalised in the previous year.\(^{(9)}\)
- In 2007, accident and emergency admissions of children with short-term complications of diabetes rose to 3,317, an increase of 8% on the previous year.\(^{(10)}\)
- An average daily bed stay costs the NHS around £215.\(^{(11)}\)
- Emergency ambulance attendance costs around £220 and minor Accident and Emergency attendance costs around £55.\(^{(9)}\)
- Recent estimates are that 10 per cent of NHS spending goes on diabetes. This equates to £9 billion a year - that's £1 million an hour.\(^{(12)}\)
**Fighting back**

**Improving awareness and preventing Type 2 diabetes**

Awareness and prevention are crucial if we want to fight this silent assassin. Although Type 1 diabetes cannot be prevented, there are steps people can take to help reduce their risk of developing Type 2 diabetes:

1. **Eat well and be physically active.** Eating a healthy balanced diet low in salt, sugar and fat with lots of fruit and vegetables and making lifestyle changes such as increasing physical activity can reduce your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes by 58 per cent. (13)

2. **Quit smoking.** Smoking can lead to high blood pressure which causes heart disease – a significant risk factor for developing Type 2 diabetes.

3. **Watch your waist.** Weight around your waist increases your risk of Type 2 diabetes. If you are male and your waist measures 37 inches or more (or 35 inches or more for men of South Asian origin); or you are female and your waist is 31.5 inches or over, then you could be at risk of Type 2 diabetes.

4. **Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight makes you more at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes: 80% of people who develop the condition are overweight at the time of diagnosis.

5. **Get checked out.** Type 2 diabetes can be undetected for then years or more, meaning that 50 per cent of people already have serious complications by the time they’re diagnosed. If you have a large waist, are over 40 (or over 25 if you’re Black or Asian) and a close member of your family has diabetes, you should see your doctor for a diabetes test.


Reaching those who are most at risk
Ethnic background and social inequalities can make some people more at risk of developing diabetes. It is important to reach those communities when trying to raise awareness of diabetes and its complications.

Ethnicity
- People from South Asian and Black backgrounds have a higher risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. (4)
- Currently over 300,000 people from those ethnic groups in the UK have already been diagnosed with diabetes. (4)
- People from South Asian and Black backgrounds develop Type 2 diabetes on average five years earlier than white people. (4)

Deprivation
- The most deprived in the UK are 2.5 times more likely to have diabetes. (14)
- Deprivation is strongly associated with higher levels of obesity, physical inactivity, unhealthy diet, smoking and high blood pressure.
- The complications of diabetes such as heart disease, stroke, amputation and kidney disease are three and a half times higher in lower socio-economic groups. (14)

The importance of early diagnosis
Approximately 50 per cent of people already show signs of complications when they are diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. Detecting the condition early is crucial if we want to stop these life-shattering complications in their tracks.

Undiagnosed Type 1 becomes a critical illness called diabetic ketoacidosis if the early symptoms go unrecognised. Ketoacidosis can lead to coma and even death if untreated.

Getting the best care and support for people with diabetes
Once someone has been diagnosed with either Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes, it is vital that they maintain good blood glucose, blood pressure and blood cholesterol control to cut their risk of developing the various complications of diabetes. At least 95 per cent of diabetes care is self-management and it is crucial that people with diabetes have access to the best possible information, support and treatment so that they can take control of their condition. Access to a structured education programme will support people with diabetes in self-managing their diabetes.
Together we can beat the silent assassin

Diabetes UK is the leading health charity for people with diabetes. We fund more than £7 million of medical research every year, provide information and support to people with diabetes and campaign on their behalf.

Diabetes UK is launching its UK-wide Silent Assassin campaign from October 2008 to show that diabetes is a serious condition, improve awareness of its devastating complications and encourage people at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes to make urgent changes in their lifestyle. The campaign will also help us reach the estimated 500,000 people who have the condition but are not aware of it. The Silent Assassin campaign is UK-wide and its messages will be communicated through a series of posters as well as newspaper and consumer magazine advertising.

The Silent Assassin campaign will also raise awareness to those living with Type 1 diabetes to encourage them to get the support and structured education they need to manage the condition and so reduce their risk of complications.

The Diabetes UK Careline (0845 120 2960) offers information and support on any aspect of managing diabetes. For more information on diabetes and its complications, visit our website at www.diabetes.org.uk.

Learn how to beat the Silent Assassin at www.diabetes.org.uk/SilentAssassin
References

1. Quality and Outcomes Framework 2007. The lastest estimate for 2007 from the Scottish Diabetes Survey estimated that the number of people with diabetes could be as high as 210,000 which would mean a prevalence of 4.3 per cent. Recent estimates for Northern Ireland taken from local quarterly 2008 Qof figures show that the number of people with diabetes could now be 62,500 which would be equal to 4 per cent of the population.

2. Improving Diabetes Services: the NSF four years on, Department of Health, 2007.

3. Figures based on PBS Diabetes Prevalence Model Phase 3: key findings, Yorkshire and Humber Public Health Observatory, May 2008. The PSB models estimates that by 2025 there will be 3.6 million people with diabetes in England and that the diabetes prevalence will be 6.48% of the population in England. The total UK figures presented here have been calculated by including forecast for the population of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland which give a total of 4.2 million people with diabetes by 2025.


8. The following mortality stats from 2006 give a figure of just over 20,000 people dying as a result of breast and prostate cancer. http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_health/DR-2006/DR_06Mort_Stats.pdf. The following report from YHPHO estimates that 26,300 deaths are attributable to diabetes.http://www.yhpho.org.uk/Download/Public/1480/1/Attributable%20deaths%20template2.pdf


10. Figures from the NHS Information Centre on Health and Social Care show that there were 3,317 emergency hospital admissions of people aged under 18 from April 2006 to March 2007.

11. Based on the University Hospital of Leicester cost of £215 per day bed stay in 2007.


Diabetes. Beware the silent assassin.
Diabetes. Now’s the time to fight back.

Together we can beat the silent assassin.