"What do you believe are the key issues around diabetes today?".

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Diabetes Overview

Diabetes mellitus is a disorder of the endocrine (hormone) system characterised by high glucose levels in the blood.

It develops when the pancreas is either unable to make insulin (or makes too little), or the insulin is unable to work effectively or both. Without insulin doing its job, glucose builds up in the blood leading to high blood glucose levels causing various health problems (Diabetes Australia, Victoria, 2004).

The three main types of diabetes are:

- **Type 1** - (Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus or Juvenile Onset Diabetes). Affects approximately 15 per cent of people with diabetes (ibid).
- **Type 2** - (Non-Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus or Mature Age Onset Diabetes). Predominantly occurs in people who are over 50 years old, have a family history of diabetes and are overweight and inactive. Affects approximately 85 per cent of people with diabetes (ibid).
- **Gestational Diabetes**
  Similar to type 2 diabetes. This is a temporary condition occurring in women who are pregnant.

Note: In Type 1 diabetes: ‘little or no insulin’ is made in the pancreas (at stage 3) or enters the bloodstream (4) and glucose builds up in the bloodstream (5).
The Diabetes Epidemic

- Diabetes is now a global epidemic with devastating humanitarian, social and economic consequences (Al AlSheikh, 2006)
- Diabetes is a problem in both developed and developing countries
- More than 230 million people worldwide are living with the disease (Al AlSheikh, 2006)
- According to some epidemiological estimates there will be 250–300 million individuals with diabetes worldwide by 2025 (Barrett, 2004)
- If undetected or poorly controlled, diabetes can lead to blindness, kidney failure, lower limb amputation, heart attack, stroke and impotence (HealthInsite, 2008)
- Each year, more than three million people die from diabetes-related causes (Al AlSheikh, 2006)
- Diabetes mellitus is a National Health Priority Areas (NHPAs) in Australia, together with Arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions, Asthma, Cancer control, Cardiovascular health, Injury prevention and control and Mental health. NHPAs are diseases and conditions that have been chosen for focused and targeted attention at a national level because they contribute significantly to the burden of illness and injury in the Australian community (AIHW, 2005)
- Diabetes affects an estimated 800,000 Australians, and many of these are not aware they have the disease (HealthInsite, 2008)
Key Issues in Diabetes

Prevention


Management/Care

Key Issues in Diabetes

**PREVENTION**
- Community based health promotion/education/development
- Large scale diabetes awareness/social marketing campaigns/interventions
- Quantitative evidence base - Ongoing analysis of diabetes data e.g., hospital data (separations & bed-days), diabetes related deaths, PBS diabetes drug use, diabetes inequalities
- Targeting/tailoring interventions for at risk groups – Indigenous persons, CALD communities, disadvantaged persons & regions
- Fostering collaboration & harnessing support from community service providers and government
- Promoting healthy eating, exercise and weight management & other preventive health information
- Reaching people who may have diabetes and don’t know it
- Counseling for psychosocial issues related to weight loss & food disorders (e.g., eating for comfort, bingeing)
- Social responsibility (food industry)

**MANAGEMENT/CARE**
- General Practice – screening, early detection, ongoing monitoring of blood pressure, cholesterol, triglycerides, weight, drugs
- Educators and Dietitians
- Hospital diabetes care – best practice
- Adequate access to services & health information for CALD persons with diabetes
- Community based health promotion/education/development/support
- Preventing diabetes complications (amputations, CVD, death)
- Medical/pharmaceutical research – ‘search for a cure’
- Channels of communication & information sharing between medical & non-medical prevention, health promotion & public health practitioners
- Alternative/natural medicine
- Counseling services – (loss of diabetic family member, loss of limb, quality of life issues)
References