

Report of expert and stakeholder consultations on the WHO Global Diabetes Compact

October 2020



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Why focus on diabetes?

Diabetes is one of the major public health challenges of the 21st century

- The global prevalence of diabetes among adults over 18 years of age rose from 4.7% in 1980 to 8.5% in 2014.¹ Today, more than 420 million people are living with diabetes worldwide. This number is estimated to rise to 570 million by 2030 and to 700 million by 2045.²
- 1 in 2 adults with diabetes are unaware of their condition. 4 out of 5 adults with undiagnosed diabetes live in developing countries. People who are unaware that they are living with diabetes are at great risk of debilitating complications that can be prevented through diagnosis and proper disease management.
- Basic technologies such as tools for blood glucose testing are not available in public sector primary health care facilities in the 50 poorest countries. Limited access to primary health care professionals trained in diabetes means that high numbers of undiagnosed, untreated and uncontrolled cases will continue to inflict preventable suffering and direct and indirect financial costs in many developing countries.
- All people with type 1 diabetes and about 60 million people with type 2 diabetes need insulin. Only about 50% of people with type 2 diabetes get the insulin they need, often because their country's health systems cannot afford it.³ The WHO Global Capacity Survey on Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) reveals that less than half of low-income countries have general availability of insulin in the public sector.³
- The WHO UHC Monitoring Report shows that diabetes health services are conspicuous by their lack of progress in comparison to those for communicable diseases.
- Pathway analysis shows that every country has options, but no country can make progress on diabetes through a single intervention. Access to insulin is necessary, but not sufficient, as holistic approaches are needed to ensure access to early diagnosis and appropriate diabetes care.
- Expressing "deep concern at the lack of progress in addressing diabetes as a public health problem", the WHO Executive Board urged Member States in January 2021 "to intensify, where appropriate, efforts to address the prevention and control of diabetes as a public health problem as part of universal health coverage by advancing comprehensive approaches on prevention, management, including its complications, and integrated service delivery, while emphasizing the importance of early and childhood prevention and ensuring that no one is left behind".⁴

Despite the progress made between 2000 and 2010 in reducing the risk of premature death from any one of the four main NCDs (cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes), the momentum has since declined, with annual reductions in premature mortality rates slowing for each of them.⁵ In high-income countries, even though the premature mortality rate due to diabetes decreased from 2000 to 2010, it increased between 2010 and 2016. In low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), the premature mortality rate due to diabetes increased across both periods.

¹ Global report on diabetes. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2016

² Saeedi P, Petersohn I, Salpea P, Malanda B, Karuranga S, Unwin N, Colagiuri S, Guariguata L, Motala AA, Ogurtsova K, Shaw JE, Bright D, Williams R; IDF Diabetes Atlas Committee. Global and regional diabetes prevalence estimates for 2019 and projections for 2030 and 2045: Results from the International Diabetes Federation Diabetes Atlas, 9th edition. *Diabetes Res Clin Pract* 2019;157:107843

³ Assessing national capacity for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases: report of the 2019 global survey. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020

⁴ EB148 - Agenda item 6. Addressing diabetes as a public health problem [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB148/B148\(6\)-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB148/B148(6)-en.pdf)

⁵ World health statistics 2020: monitoring health for the SDGs, sustainable development goals. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020

The rising mortality rates from diabetes are associated with – among other factors – the increasing prevalence of diabetes due to the increasing prevalence of obesity. In 2016, the prevalence of obesity among adults globally had increased approximately 3 times¹ and the prevalence in children and adolescents approximately five times since 1975.^{2,3}

Today, more than 420 million adults are living with diabetes worldwide. This number is estimated to rise to 578 million by 2030 and to 700 million by 2045. Diabetes is among the top 10 causes of death and has shown a significant increase in deaths, of 70%, since 2000. Diabetes is also responsible for the largest rise in male deaths among the top 10 causes of death, with an 80% increase since 2000. Losses in Gross Domestic Product worldwide due to direct medical and indirect costs of diabetes have been estimated at US\$ 1.7 trillion between 2011 and 2030, and US\$ 800 billion for LMICs alone. The growth of the prevalence of diabetes has been most rapid in LMICs, where health systems are to varying degrees ill-equipped to diagnose and manage diabetes. Consequently, LMICs carry the highest burden of diabetes-related premature deaths and complications.



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The interplay between the diabetes epidemic and the COVID-19 pandemic

- The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a high proportion of people with diabetes among hospitalized patients with severe manifestations of COVID-19, and a higher mortality in hospitalized people with COVID-19 and diabetes compared to people hospitalized with COVID-19 without diabetes. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused severe disruption of diabetes services and supplies.
- A WHO Survey showed that 49% of countries surveyed had partially or completely disrupted services for treatment for diabetes and diabetes-related complications. 40% of countries reported unavailability of essential medicines as a result of the impact of the pandemic.
- On 15 September 2020, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on the comprehensive and coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic, recognizing “that people living with NCDs (including diabetes) are at a higher risk of developing severe COVID-19 symptoms and are among the most impacted by the pandemic” and called upon Member States to strengthen efforts to address NCDs as part of primary health care

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