



Diabetes in Women

by

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As the world commemorate the International Diabetes day, we would like to acknowledge the hundreds of campaigns, activities, screenings, lecture, meetings and more, occurring each year that is proving internationally effective in spreading the message about this disease and raising awareness for the condition.

Diabetes is a chronic disease that can lead to serious complications which can be fatal. Patients can however make day to day decisions to control the disease and lower the risk of serious complications. The number of people with diabetes is increasing due to the worldwide ageing population, increasing prevalence of obesity and lack of physical activity. According to The World Health Organization (WHO), around 347 million people worldwide have diabetes, and half of those are women. In 2012 around 1.5 million deaths were estimated to be caused by diabetes. Sexual and reproductive health are not any more the dominant themes that shape how women can live longer healthier lives.

Understanding how women acquire, experience and treat health conditions such as diabetes, is becoming a major public health constraint. Globally around 85% of undiagnosed cases of diabetes are in low and middle income countries with limited resources and health care facilities. The burden of the disease is harder on women and in particular pregnant women as the disease can affect the mother and the unborn babies. These are more life threatening for women living in resource-constrained settings, who often experience limited access to healthcare and who are socially and economically marginalized. Diabetic women are more likely to be affected by other fatal conditions like heart attacks. The interaction between diabetes and other chronic diseases have large impact on public health and therefore had an adverse effect on the Millennium Development Goals.

The global diabetes community has made remarkable steps towards increasing awareness of diabetes. The WHO's initiated a global diabetes program to promote surveillance, raise awareness and encourage prevention of diabetes by effective management of lifestyle measures such as healthy diet and physical activity to maintain appropriate weight. With the large number of undiagnosed cases worldwide, the size of the problem is still not clear. More research is currently needed at country level, and in different community settings to assess the prevalence of diabetes, availability of care and the effect of rapid changes on lifestyle factors on people's health.