



Elderly Diabetics Life Expectancy is Reduced

People who develop diabetes late in life often suffer from a range of diabetes-related complications, and their life expectancy is shorter than that of nondiabetic individuals of the same age, a new study shows.

In a recent article in the Archives of Internal Medicine, Dr. Frank A. Sloan, of Duke University, and colleagues point out that "little is known about the impact of diabetes mellitus in elderly populations."

The researchers examined illness and mortality rates in 33,772 Medicare beneficiaries with diabetes and in 25,563 similar people without diabetes ("controls") over a 14 year period.

The death rate was over 9 percentage points higher among the people with diabetes than the control patients. Being newly diagnosed as diabetic translated into a loss of life expectancy of just over 2 years.

Overall, 92 percent of the diabetes group experienced an adverse health event compared with 72 percent of the control group.

Disorders affecting the legs and complications associated with surgery were higher among patients with diabetes. Furthermore, 58 percent of those with diabetes were diagnosed with heart failure, compared with 34 percent of the control group. While kidney disease and retinal eye disorders were less common, both increased markedly in the diabetic group.

"Although the present data provide no insight into the cause of these patterns, the burden of diabetes mellitus complications on the individual and on the health care system is enormous," the researchers conclude.

Archives of Internal Medicine, May 14, 2007.

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DID YOU KNOW:

TV linked with poor diabetes control: Diabetic children who spent the most time glued to the TV had a tougher time controlling their blood sugar, according to a Norwegian study that illustrates yet another downside of too much television. The study involved 538 children with an average age of 13. In Norway, about 25,000 people have Type 1 diabetes. In the United States, there are 3 million with the condition and about 30 million worldwide.

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