GUEST EDITORIAL

BAME DIABETES

Awareness to Action – Type 2 diabetes prevention for younger South Asians

It is well known that your risk of Type 2 diabetes increases the older you get. It also increases if you have a close family member with diabetes and if you’re from a black or South Asian background. These are the non-modifiable risk factors. But people’s risk of Type 2 diabetes is also increased by being overweight – especially around the belly. People can do something about these risk factors by being more active, eating better and losing weight. And it’s being overweight that is largely behind the dramatic increase of people with Type 2 diabetes and those at increased risk of it.

For South Asian people, we know that their risk increases at a lower BMI and that their risk increases at a younger age. NICE has published guidance on the prevention of Type 2 diabetes, which notes populations that might be at increased risk of developing the condition and should therefore be considered for risk assessment. These include South Asian individuals aged between 25 and 39 years.

Meeting the challenge

We have plenty of experience of helping people understand risk and what to do about it. Our Know Your Risk events and online tool help people find out their risk and how to reduce it. With NHS England and Public Health England, we set up the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme, which helps people to reduce their risk with tailored support to lose weight and get more active. We campaign for a healthier society and are part of the Obesity Health Alliance, which convinced the government to introduce the sugar levy. We’re now seeking action on better food labelling and the end of marketing junk food to children. Meanwhile, our Community Champions volunteer in communities more at risk of Type 2 diabetes and make them aware of what they need to do to reduce their risk.

The key challenge for us is - how do we use these tools to get to, and build, the understanding of risk among the younger, 25- to 39-year-old group? Awareness to Action is an attempt to achieve these ends. We are working in partnership with NHS Derby, Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Derby City Council in two wards of Derby, where there is a high concentration of the South Asian population. There, we will use the tools that Diabetes UK has developed, along with a local media information campaign, and a partnership with local primary care and public health agencies. We will pay close attention to the actions that the population takes in response and think about how we can take the lessons forward to help us meet this challenge at a bigger scale and for other ethnic groups across the UK.

In the following article, Farhana Darwich, Project Manager for Awareness to Action, describes the project in more detail. Watch this space for updates on the projects and lessons learned, early next year.

REFERENCES

5. NICE Guidance: Type 2 diabetes: prevention in people at high risk. Public health guideline [PH38]. Published date: July 2012. Last updated: September 2017