

Editorial

"A Little Learning is a Dangerous Thing..."

Gone are the days when diabetes was viewed as a disease of the old. Back then, it was very unusual to find patients with diabetes mellitus type 2 in particular under the age of forty. All that has changed now thanks in no small part to our embrace of everything western. That is not to say however that 'Westernization is sin'. The impact of western education in expanding our knowledge base about diabetes, and many other diseases we would otherwise have attributed to supernatural forces, cannot be overemphasized. However, like the Chinese philosophy of yin and yang, westernization also brought with it radical dietary and lifestyle changes that are not only detrimental to our health, but have also helped to accelerate disease processes, thus contributing to the increased incidence of diabetes in today's world. The World Health Organisation tells us that about 347 million people worldwide have diabetes with an estimated 3.4 million people dying from complications arising from the disease in 2004 alone. We are also told that diabetes is projected to become the 7th leading cause of death in the world by the year 2030. More than 80% of these annual deaths occur in low and middle income countries, a category Nigeria unfortunately falls into. It is time we all wake up to the reality that diabetes has become an epidemic, not only cutting people's lives short in their prime but causing a drastic reduction in the quality of life of its sufferers.

Knowledge is power. However, it is sad to know that even in the 21st century, basic knowledge about diabetes is still scarce among the general populace in Nigeria. There is still this permeating belief that what you don't know cannot hurt you. The consequence of this is that a lot of people are only diagnosed as when they present in the hospitals with complications of diabetes. Sadder still is the fact that even health workers don't fare better. I was privy to a discussion among medical students about the role of carbonated drinks in the development of

diabetes and boy, was I alarmed. The only thing that is more dangerous than having no knowledge is having half-baked knowledge.

This edition of the IFEMED journal has tried to address these issues. With articles ranging from the role of genetics in diabetes, to dietary and lifestyle modifications, and recent advances in the management of diabetes, we have tried not only to arm health workers with the knowledge required to stop this scourge in its tracks, but also to enlighten the general public and encourage them to begin charity at home. As you read through this edition, remember the words of Alexander Pope:

*"A little learning is a dangerous thing,
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring,
For shallow draughts intoxicate the brain
And drinking largely sobers us again."*



Oluwafemi Popoola
Editor-in-Chief
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Foreword

I have proudly followed the various publications of the IFEMED journal over the years and noted the diversity of the subjects/topics published. Managing people with diabetes is a passion of mine so I always readily identify with any group that highlights the burden of this non communicable disease. The impact of diabetes is well recognized worldwide. In 2006, the UN Resolution 61/225 highlighted and included chronic non communicable disease as part of its developmental goals of MDGs. The prevalence of diabetes is definitely on the rise and this will affect the low and middle income countries worldwide including sub Saharan African countries like Nigeria.

The apparent prevalence of hyperglycaemia depends on the diagnostic criteria used in epidemiological survey. Many countries including Nigeria unfortunately do not have accurate data on diabetes and its risk factors. Diabetes affects all the systems of the body as have been demonstrated in the widespread topics of this journal. The rule of halves is the most pertinent in the diagnosis of diabetes and its complications (50% are undiagnosed, 50% do not achieve good glycaemic control and 50% develop complications)

which is the presenting problem.

This edition of the IFEMED journal provides the consequences of diabetes from a different perspective. I highly commend the tenacity of the students in continuing the tradition of educating the public via this medium and in joining the global campaign to highlight, educate and reduce the burden of diabetes, its adverse health and socio-economic outcomes. People with diabetes and their families deserve better.

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