

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE WITH DIABETES FOR WHOM
ADHERENCE TO A HIGH CARBOHYDRATE-FIBRE DIET IS REQUIRED

A.A. KOURIS*, M.L. WAHLQVIST*, A. WORSLEY**, T. BRUERE***, C. CAMERON***,
B. MORIESON*** and J. BRAZIER*

Before the advent of insulin in 1921, a high fat-low carbohydrate diet was advocated for diabetes. After the discovery of insulin, a modified carbohydrate (CHO) diet with normal to high amounts of protein and fat was prescribed. Current dietary recommendations have been based on the universal finding that high-CHO diets actually improve glucose tolerance and the expectation that lowered fat intake would reduce the rate of atherogenesis in people with diabetes.

Prior to 1978, the dietary policy at Prince Henry's Hospital was to restrict CHO consumption to no more than 40% of total daily energy intake. However, after this period the dietary policy was changed and CHO intakes of 50-60% were encouraged. A system of medical and dietary reviews was instituted to assess adherence. It was found that less than half of the 13 patients interviewed had increased their CHO consumption to more than 50% of their total daily energy intake. This somewhat surprising and disappointing finding is not however unique to the diabetic patients attending Prince Henry's Hospital. A similar discovery has been reported by others (Blau 1982; Kohn et al 1985).

A questionnaire approach was taken to explore the reasons for dietary change, as well as reasons for rejection of dietary innovation. An objective is to describe patients diet, health and health habits, desire to learn about diabetes, attitudes towards diabetes and its treatment and then to link these characteristics with food behaviours and habits. A random sample of 40 diabetic out-patients, out of a total population of 1000 patients, was surveyed. The questionnaire was developed jointly by dietitians, diabetes educators, diabetes physicians and behavioural scientists. After pre-testing, a questionnaire with this format was devised: 1. YOUR HEALTH AND HEALTH HABITS (9 questions) 2. YOUR DIET (10 questions) 3. HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR DIET (6 questions) 4. HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT DIABETES (6 questions) 5. THE TREATMENT FOR YOUR DIABETES (11 questions) 6. DIABETES EDUCATION (4 questions) 7. BACKGROUND (9 questions).

Characteristics of a sample of 40 diabetic out-patients attending diabetic clinic at Prince Henry's Hospital are shown in the Table: (20 male / 20 female)

AGE (%)	DIABETES (%)	EDUCATION (%)	HANDICAPS (%)
10-30 : 15	Type 1 : 30	Some High School: 22.5	Impaired vision: 50
30-50 : 12.5	Type 2 : 70	Completed High School: 12.5	Impaired hearing: 20
50-70 : 60		Tech. or Trade Cert: 20.0	Problems walking: 30
70-100: 12.5		Univeristy Degree: 7.5	
		Primary School: 37.5	

In the cases of patients unable to read English, due to language difficulties, an interpreter was used (17%) and in some of the cases of visual impairment (17%) the questionnaire was presented orally. For the remainder, the questionnaire was manageable by individuals without assistance. Thus, in targeting an education programme for this patient group, account needs to be taken of the high proportions of Type 2 diabetics, elderly patients and those with only primary school education.

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KOHN, H. and GODDARD, K. (1985). *The Diabetes Educator* 9 : 25.

* Department of Human Nutrition, Deakin University, Victoria 3217

** Division of Human Nutrition, CSIRO, Adelaide, SA 5000

*** Diabetes Unit, Prince Henry's Hospital, Melbourne, 3004