

Diabetes knowledge among Croatian non-medical high school and university students

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Dear Editor,

The prevalence of diabetes mellitus in Croatia is about 6.1 % in the age group of 18–65; 92 % have type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) while about 40 % are left undiagnosed [1]. Since there is a world trend of emerging prevalence of T2DM among youth which could be preventable by lifestyle modification [2], we estimated the current knowledge about diabetes, risk factors, symptoms and complications, treatment and management among young population (16–24 years) of non-medical high school and university students in Croatia capital, Zagreb. According to the “convenience sampling” method using the questionnaire with closed ended questions consisted of six items we studied 67 (27.2 %) high school and 179 (72.8 %) university students. Two hundred and thirty students (93.5 %) gave the correct answer regarding the diabetes definition while only 12 (4.9 %) did not know what it was. Two hundred and nineteen (88.9 %) show the awareness that diabetes can affect everybody regardless of genetics, age or lifestyle and 192 (78 %) find it a non-curable state. Eighty two (33.3 %) participants consider insulin as only and sufficient diabetes management instrument, while 129 (52.4 %) find diet, physical activity and other medications also to be important. Chronic diabetic complications are considered to be blindness, chronic kidney disease, cardiovascular disease and sensation difficulties all together by 163 (66.3 %) of the participants. University students have higher rate of correct answers regarding what is diabetes ($P=0.014$), treatment

regiments ($P<0.001$) and disease complications ($P<0.001$) compared to high-school students. Our results clearly show that the young population of non-medical students is generally well informed regarding the definition of the disease while they do not seem to be as well informed considering the topics on the symptomatology and treatment options as previously reported among university students enrolled in non-health care related professional courses in the United Arab Emirates [3]. The positive correlation of age and academic achievement observed in our population is partially in accordance with Angeles-Llerenas et al. (2005) who reported the positive correlation of diabetes knowledge with age and education of students’ mothers [4]. In order to act in the right way on insufficient knowledge and misconception to this global-burden disease proper educational programs should be developed. We do believe that educational programs should be pointed out on risk factors and prevention, because education will lead to the formation of proper attitude.

Conflict of interest None

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