

Advances in the Care of Diabetes and Cancer

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OPINION ARTICLE

Researchers are trying to find out more about the relationship between type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer.

Type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer have common risk factors:

Age With age, it increases the risk of cancer and type 2 diabetes.

Sex In general, cancer is more common in men. Men have a slightly higher risk of diabetes than women.

Race / Ethnicity African-Americans and non-Hispanic whites are more likely to have cancer. African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics / Latinos, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders are at a higher risk for type 2 diabetes.

Overweight Being overweight can increase your risk for type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer. Poor physical activity - A higher level of physical activity reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer.

Smoking Smoking is related to various types of cancer. Studies indicate that smoking is a risk factor for type 2 diabetes.

Alcoholic Drinks Drinking more than one drink a day, for women, or more than two a day, for men, increases the risk of diabetes and cancer.

At first glance, it may appear that diabetes and cancer are unrelated; However, as with other non-communicable diseases, the number of patients with diabetes and cancer is continuously increasing, especially in low- and middle-income countries; And according to recent studies, people with type 1 and type 2 diabetes are more commonly diagnosed with cancer - and are more likely to die of cancer - than people without diabetes. The relationship between the two diseases is stronger among certain types of cancer, including kidney, pancreatic, breast and colorectal cancer.

Each year, approximately 1.5 million people die as a direct consequence of diabetes; and more than 80% of diabetes deaths

occur in developing countries. Cancer is among the leading causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide, with approximately 14 million cases and 8.2 deaths each year. The proportion of diagnosed cancers in low- and middle-income regions, such as Africa, Asia, South America, and Central America, is estimated to account for about 70% of all cases worldwide.

Without early detection and timely diagnosis both patients with diabetes and those with cancer are at risk of being diagnosed at advanced stages, reducing their chances of managing the disease. Limited access to diagnostic tools and innovative and quality medicines is a very important barrier in reducing the increasing impact of diabetes and cancer in low- and middle-income countries.

Cancer and Its Relationship to Diabetes

Prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases, such as cancer and diabetes, can only be achieved through the joint efforts of health professionals, governments and regulatory agencies, insurers and individuals themselves. The health industry also plays an important role in gaining better access to diagnostic tools and innovative treatments. We must be aware of this responsibility and commit ourselves to the constant search for new ways to transform health care and achieve great successes and better outcomes for patients in Latin America.

There are certain pharmaceutical companies that are already working and research is under way to restore lost beta cells - which produce insulin and allow the body to regulate blood sugar levels - in patients with type 1 diabetes. The study is still in its early stages, but results suggest that an oral drug could help treat or cure type 1 diabetes.

Studies are also underway to close the gaps in cancer treatments in Latin America, consolidating the latest knowledge on how cancer works at the genetic level and the mechanisms

of oncogenesis, in order to develop innovative treatment options that seek to inhibit genetic alterations which cause the growth and progression of various tumors, thus improving the outcome of the patient, in several types of cancer.

Some strategies to control diabetes and cancer at different stages include:

- Prevention by reducing exposure to risk factors.
- Early detection.
- Timely access to innovative and cost-effective treatments.
- Promoting adherence to treatment.
- Monitoring and patient support, either through telemedicine or greater presence in remote areas.

Although there are signs of progress, Latin American patients with diabetes and / or cancer still face many barriers to accessing the care they need. From the shortage of resources and trained health professionals to the lack of infrastructure and access to specialist physicians, which particularly affects patients who are out of urban areas; Limited coverage of inno-

vative therapies by the public sector; And the threat of supply of large quantities of drugs available in the region that do not meet the required quality standards.

With this in mind, collaboration between governments and non-profit organizations is needed to help overcome these challenges by creating awareness of the problems and forming alliances to facilitate access to diagnostic tools and innovative treatments.

Much remains to be learned about the relationship between diabetes and cancer; For example, could be explained in part by the risk factors that increase the risk of contracting both diseases, such as obesity, gender, or lack of physical activity or a healthy diet. Much remains to be done to ensure that all patients have access to the best possible care.

However, it is clear that patients must also be empowered to combat these diseases. Researchers recommend that people with diabetes be screened for cancer, which could help with early detection, thus reducing premature deaths due to cancer.