

**Louisiana Pharmacists Association**

450 Laurel Street, Suite 1400, Baton Rouge, LA 70801

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Julie Fuselier

Crystal Carter

Phone: 225/346-6883

FAX: 225/344-1132

**Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Public about Diabetes**

November is aimed at raising public awareness and promoting the importance of control and prevention of diabetes. The Louisiana Pharmacist Association (LPA) would like to join the American Diabetes Association in their effort to raise awareness of this serious disease. LPA also recognizes the important role pharmacists can play in diabetes management.

**Every 17 seconds, an individual is diagnosed with Diabetes.**

As the number of diabetes cases has risen to staggeringly high levels over the past decade, the disease has emerged as a serious public health concern. It is estimated to affect nearly 26 million people in the United States, while an additional 79 million are at high risk for developing the disease at some point in their life. Recent estimates by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conclude that 1 in 3 Americans will be afflicted with diabetes by the year 2050. Patients with diabetes have a 2-fold increased risk of death compared to people of similar age without the disease. It is a major cause of stroke and heart disease, and represents the seventh leading cause of death among citizens in the United States. Diabetes does not simply affect the elderly population; rather, it affects all age groups. While it affects a disproportionate percentage of people age 65 and older, an estimated 27%, nearly 2 million

people, age 20 and older, were newly diagnosed with diabetes last year. Additionally, 215,000 individuals under age 20 had diabetes in 2010. Therefore, effective management strategies are necessary to help those with diabetes live longer, healthier lives, while prevention is aimed at early identification and reduction of risks for diabetes.<sup>1</sup>

### **Financial impact of Diabetes**

In addition to the growing public health concern, diabetes represents a significant financial burden on the U.S. healthcare system and economy. According to 2007 estimates from the CDC, the total cost, direct and indirect, of diabetes in the U.S. was \$174 billion. Indirect costs associated with disability, productivity loss, and premature death alone accounted for \$58 million. Patients with diabetes have medical costs amounting to twice that for people without the disease.<sup>1</sup> According to the American Diabetes Association, \$1 out of every \$5 in total healthcare costs is the expense for caring for someone with diabetes. Including the costs associated with gestational diabetes, prediabetes, and undiagnosed cases, the total diabetes-related costs in the U.S. could be more than \$218 billion.<sup>2</sup> In addition to reducing the public health risk, effective management and prevention strategies can also significantly reduce the financial burden of diabetes on patients and the U.S. healthcare system.

### **What is Diabetes?**

Diabetes is characterized by high levels of blood glucose as a result of defects in the body's ability to produce insulin, respond to insulin, or both. If untreated, diabetes can result in severe complications, such as high blood pressure, stroke, kidney disease, and blindness, and it can lead to premature death. There are two main types of diabetes, and each has a distinct cause and treatment.<sup>1</sup>

Type 1 diabetes, previously referred to as insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, develops when the body's immune system attacks and destroys the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas. As a result, these individuals are unable to produce enough insulin to properly

regulate their body's blood glucose. Type 1 diabetes patients require insulin delivered by injection or pump to survive. This form of diabetes is most common in children and young adults, and it accounts for about 5% of total diagnosed cases. Genetics and environmental factors may play a role in the development of this form of diabetes. Unfortunately, there are no known means by which to prevent type 1 diabetes, although studies are underway.<sup>1</sup>

Type 2 diabetes, previously known as non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, accounts for the overwhelming majority of diagnosed diabetes cases in the United States. In this form of diabetes, the pancreas produces insulin; however, the body's cells are unable to appropriately respond to it. This condition is termed insulin resistance. The pancreas produces increasing amounts of insulin in order to overcome the resistance. As the need for insulin continues to increase, the pancreas gradually loses its ability to produce it. Among other risk factors, older age, obesity, family history of diabetes, and physical inactivity can contribute to the development of type 2 diabetes. A healthy diet and exercise program coupled with oral medications can keep type 2 diabetes under control.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Pharmacist's Role in Diabetes Management**

Pharmacists are highly educated healthcare professionals that can play a significant role in caring for patients with diabetes. Pharmacists are recognized as the most accessible healthcare providers, and they possess the knowledge to recognize the risk factors for diabetes. As such, they are in an excellent position to help identify patients at risk for diabetes through community blood glucose screenings and reviews of prescription records. At-risk patients, or patients who may be undiagnosed, can then be referred to their physician to begin appropriate care. Depending on the pharmacist's practice setting, patient assessment of treatment outcomes can be difficult. Some pharmacists work in collaboration with physicians to manage and monitor patient outcomes and care. Pharmacists who do not have collaborative agreements with physicians can assess patient needs and ensure standards of care using patient questionnaires

based on ADA standards of care. Patient education is a continuous process that begins immediately after the diagnosis; it provides patients with information about their medications and blood glucose monitoring, and continues with supportive information to encourage patient adherence.<sup>3</sup> Apart from providing valuable information regarding patient medications, pharmacists, working together with other members of the diabetes care team, can increase the effectiveness and quality of diabetes care, while reducing patient costs associated with diabetes care. Studies have shown that pharmacist involvement in diabetes management via education and outcomes assessment can result in a reduction in patient disease parameters, such as blood pressure, cholesterol and hemoglobin A<sub>1C</sub> (HbA<sub>1C</sub>), a measure of long-term blood glucose control. In addition to improved outcomes, studies have shown that patients in diabetes management programs involving pharmacists had reduced monthly medical expenses compared to those receiving traditional care.<sup>4</sup> Pharmacists can significantly contribute to improved long-term patient outcomes, improved quality of care, and reduced medical expense.

**Ask your pharmacist to work with your physician to manage your diabetes!**

Sources:

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2. American Diabetes Association. American Diabetes Month 2011 Fact Sheet. Alexandria, VA. [http://main.diabetes.org/dorg/PDFs/ADM2011/American-Diabetes-Month-fact-sheet\\_final.pdf](http://main.diabetes.org/dorg/PDFs/ADM2011/American-Diabetes-Month-fact-sheet_final.pdf)
3. Campbell RK. Role of the pharmacist in diabetes management. *Am J Health Syst Pharm.* 2002 Dec 1;59 Suppl 9:S18-21.
4. Armor BL, Britton ML, Dennis VC, Letassy NA. A review of pharmacist contributions to diabetes care in the United States. *J Pharm Pract.* 2010 Jun;23(3):250-64.

Author:

Jonathan M. Savoy, Pharm.D. Candidate 2014

University of Louisiana at Monroe College of Pharmacy

**The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Phyllis Perron, LPA Executive Director at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at [www.louisianapharmacists.com](http://www.louisianapharmacists.com).**

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