## UNDERESTIMATED PSYCHOSOCIAL BURDENS FROM DIABETES

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*The OECD countries have 83 million people suffering from diabetes; by 2030 this figure will increase to 100 million. Experts at the European Health Forum Gastein criticised the fact that the massive psychosocial effects of the disease on diabetics and their families are largely underestimated.*

**Bad Hofgastein, 2 October 2013** – The downright pandemic spread of diabetes puts an enormous burden on social and economic systems in Europe, especially in times of economic crisis and demographic change according to experts reporting today at the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG). The OECD countries currently have some 83 million people suffering from diabetes, a figure estimated to rise to 100 million by 2030. The tenor of the discussions at the EHFG was that health care systems have to focus more sharply on the overall enormity of the pandemic.

„Resilient and Innovative Health Systems for Europe” is the slogan for this year's EHFG. More than 550 participants from some 45 countries are attending Europe's most important health policy conference in Bad Hofgastein to exchange views on key issues affecting European health systems.

“The heavy psychosocial burdens from diabetes for patients and their families continue to be largely ignored by health care policy”, Dr Jens Kröger, Director of the Diabetes Centre Hamburg Bergedorf and Board Member of Deutsche Diabeteshilfe, told the European Health Forum Gastein. “Innovative health care systems must make a greater effort to deal with this problem.”

“Diabetes Attitudes, Wishes and Needs 2” (DAWN 2), a study conducted in 17 countries and four continents and discussed at the EHFG, shows just how dramatic the psychosocial effects of the disease can be. With a total of 15,438 study subjects, including 8,596 patients, 2,057 family members and 4,785 treating health care providers, DAWN-2 is the most comprehensive scientific study ever conducted on the psychosocial burdens of diabetes on patients and their family members.

**14 % of diabetics suffer from depression**

Several key findings of the study: 44.6 % of people with diabetes consider their disease a heavy burden; 13.8 % of them suffer from depression because of this. For about one fifth of all diabetics, their health situation has a negative impact on familial and social relationships. A still considerable percentage of somewhat less than half of all affected individuals consider the disease to impair their ability to cope with everyday life.

Just under half of all diabetics (48.8 %) take part in diabetes training programmes. Despite new drugs and forms of therapy, many diabetics fail to achieve the target blood sugar level. And although 85 % of diabetics can rely on support from their family, public assistance is insufficient in many countries.

“The study shows definite deficits in the management of chronic diseases. Problems concerning the psychosocial support of patients, basic conditions and the interdisciplinary provision of health care must be resolved,” said Dr Kröger.

**Heavy burdens on family members**

The psychosocial consequences for family members are also considerable. The DAWN-2 Study shows that diabetes is a heavy burden for more than one third of all family members (35.3 %). 61.3 % of family members are burdened by the concern that their family member with diabetes might have possible hypoglycaemia. 44.6 % of all family members indicated that the disease had negative effects on their emotional state. It is problematic that a sizable 37.1 % of family members do not know how to help and be of assistance to a person with diabetes. At the same time, just under 40 % of family members feel the need to be more closely involved in diabetes treatment of their family member. Just 23.1 % of family members currently take part in training programmes.

Dr Kröger: “In light of these findings, the health policy goal in diabetes management has to be to promote patient-centred health care, self-management and psychosocial support while also getting family members more closely involved.”

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