Type 2 diabetes is one of the most common causes of death in Europe and the number of people with the condition is significantly on the rise. This study carried out by researchers at the Farr Institute Swansea investigated the relationship between poor levels of blood sugar control and increased treatment in GP practices in Wales.

The Challenge:
Type 2 diabetes is one of the most common causes of death in Europe and the number of people with the condition is significantly on the rise.

It is a chronic condition affecting over 5% of the Welsh population. It is associated with a number of adverse conditions and complications, such as amputations, blindness, reduced life expectancy and lower quality of life. The consequences of this, is an increase in disability, healthcare and financial burden. It is estimated that 10% of the NHS budgets in England and Wales are spent on the treating Type 2 diabetes.

The Research:
This research study investigated the relationship between poor levels of blood sugar control and increased treatment in GP practices in Wales.

The work was funded by pharmaceutical company Janssen-Cilag Ltd., and was carried out by a team of researchers at Farr CIPHER at Swansea University in partnership with Janssen and doctors from the NHS.

Working with the SAIL Databank, which removes the identities of all the people in the study (to protect their privacy and to comply with all data protection rules); the study looked in detail at type 2 diabetes in Wales.

Data was extracted from both GP and hospital records, where 85,221 individuals with type 2 diabetes were studied in terms of population, care, overall health and outcomes.

The research focused on the relationships between:
- Control and changes in patient medication
- Deprivation and levels of type 2 diabetes

The Results:
The research found that higher levels of deprivation are associated with an increased rate of diabetes.

A cost effective way of improving outcomes may be to identify and focus on particular sub groups with poor control, such as those diagnosed at younger ages.

A large number of those diagnosed with the condition do not receive any medication. While the disease may be controlled with diet and lifestyle for some of this group, evidence suggests that by providing increased treatment with medication for at least some of these patients may improve outcomes.

The research also showed that a large proportion of patients with high levels of glucose (sugar) in their blood do not receive intensified treatment recommended by NICE guidelines in a timely manner to improve control – highlighting another area in which improvements can be made.

The Impact:
This study was carried out on behalf of the Bevan Commission, an independent commission that makes recommendations to Welsh Government about NHS policy. This work has now provided vital new evidence and recommendations that can be used going forward to help tackle the treatment of diabetes 2 in Wales.

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