

Factors Influencing Dietary Practice among Type 2 Diabetics

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Background: Improving dietary practice alone without the adherence to other diabetic self-management elements can improve glycemic control and may reduce glycosylated hemoglobin (HbA1c) by 1% to 2%. However, diabetic patients usually have poor adherence to follow appropriate and long-term dietary practice.

Objective: To evaluate the factors influencing dietary practice and to evaluate the relationship between patients' dietary practice and level of HbA1c.

Design: A cross-sectional study.

Setting: Five Health Centers, Bahrain.

Method: The study was performed in Bahrain during 2011; it included 400 type 2 diabetic patients. The sample was selected from the diabetic clinics of the primary health care centers. Only the adult patients who attended the clinic at least twice were included in the study.

Result: The majority of the sample was 50 years old with low educational level. Most of them were overweight and obese and had poor HbA1c level (>7%). However, patients had good family support and high motivation to see a dietician and to follow diet regimen if given. Despite all previous indications to reinforce diabetic self-management education, specifically dietary advice, 56 (14%) denied receiving any dietary advice. The majority received their dietary advice from doctors and only 65 (16.3%) received advice from the diabetic nurse. Most patients never have been referred neither to a dietician nor to a health educator (318 (79.5%), 338 (84.5%) respectively). Although, patients had mainly average and good dietary practice, it may not indicate the actual dietary habits of the studied patients due to some limitations in the study. The two main barriers to dietary regimen are "it takes efforts" were 183 (45.8%) and "being busy" were 178 (45.5%).

Conclusion: Although the majority of the diabetic patients were poorly controlled, most had average and good dietary practice score. There was positive relationship between the dietary practice and the HbA1c level. The lack of proper professional dietary assessment, follow-up and advice by the health care providers are the main influence on dietary practice of type 2 diabetic patients in Bahrain.