

Knowledge and Practices Associated with Diabetes among Patients with Chronic Diabetes Mellitus in Rural Areas of Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa

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KEYWORDS Living with Diabetes. Knowledge. Beliefs. Practices

ABSTRACT Diabetes mellitus is a chronic progressive disease that can lead to debilitating complications and premature death if not effectively controlled. The purpose of this study was to establish the level of knowledge of diabetes among patients with diabetes mellitus in Vhembe district of Limpopo province, South Africa, and to determine how this impacts on their attitudes and practices towards diabetes mellitus. A quantitative descriptive design was used to collect data between February–October 2013 using pre-tested structured questionnaire among patients with diabetes mellitus at the randomly sampled three health care facilities within the Limpopo province. Respondents, aged 40-65 years were conveniently sampled from the randomly sampled healthcare centres in Limpopo province. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents. A quantitative descriptive design was used to collect data. Findings of this study revealed that whilst only 32.4 percent of the respondents were aware of the diabetes mellitus, the majority (67.6%) of the respondents appeared to be unaware. Knowledge of the role of obesity and physical inactivity in producing diabetes was very low. About 3 in 4 (75.5%) respondents reported that they do not associate obesity with risk factors for diabetes mellitus. However, 62.0 percent of the respondents believed that diabetes mellitus could lead to complications such as blindness. Only the minority (18.3%) of the respondents report to have been able to control own blood sugar level by diet. While the majority (81.7%) of the respondents showed low level of knowledge on the control of the glucose level. The knowledge, attitude and practice scores were low in most areas of diabetes care emphasising the need for additional health education and national diabetes campaigns.