Diabetics at higher risk of tuberculosis infection

Geneva - May 2011- People with diabetes face a much higher risk of contracting tuberculosis (TB) than non-diabetics, according to results of a study published in the May issue of the Bulletin of the World Health Organization.

The study, done in medically-underserved communities on both sides of the border of Mexico and the United States of America (USA), found that people with diabetes face three to five times the risk of contracting TB than non-diabetics living in the same settings.

Although the link between diabetes (primarily type 1) and TB has been known since the beginning of the 20th century, it had largely been forgotten by the 1950s as diabetes could be controlled by insulin and drugs to treat TB became available.

“With the massive increase in diabetes in TB-endemic areas, our findings highlight the emerging impact of type 2 diabetes on TB control in regions of the world where both diseases are prevalent,” says co-author Blanca I Restrepo, from the University of Texas, USA.

“Many countries are missing opportunities to prevent TB in diabetes patients. People with diabetes who have had recent contact with a TB patient are prime candidates for preventive treatment.” The researchers also recommend screening TB contacts for diabetes to improve detection and management of both diseases.

This study has implications in particular for countries with high prevalence of both diseases, such as Bangladesh, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Russian Federation.

Read the paper here: http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/89/5/10-085738/en/index.html

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