

Drug use in type 2 diabetes:

how pharmacists are helping patients manage



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Background

Pharmacists have an important role to play in educating patients early about the progressive nature of diabetes and the importance of compliance with oral antidiabetic agents as well as their medicines for diabetes-related conditions. This is increasingly important with the number of Australians with diabetes having tripled since 1981 and continuing to increase. In the recent 5-year AusDiab study, it was noted that eight out of every 1000 people in Australia developed diabetes i.e. approximately 275 adults every day.¹

1107 pharmacists including 825 pre-registration pharmacists participated in the *Drug use in type 2 diabetes* audit offered in 2005 as part of the *Reducing risk in type 2 diabetes* program for health professionals. Each pharmacist completed a structured audit tool for ten patients. The tool provided pharmacists with the opportunity to review provision of patient information and to develop a structured approach to patient counselling in any practice setting.

Actions documented which highlight counselling provided

- 97% of the 2 462 patients recorded as having an antidiabetic drug prescription dispensed for the first time were counselled.
- More than 90% of the 6 417 patients with one or more reasons to be considered high priority for counselling on all aspects of their medicines did receive counselling.
- 2 out of every 3 of the total of 9 963 patients were counselled about lifestyle issues such as regular moderate exercise and weight reduction which can improve glycaemic control and reduce cardiovascular risk and the need for antidiabetic drugs.²
- Average time taken to counsel patients was less than 5 minutes. Participants highlighted the benefits of using a structured counselling process to ensure the most important information was provided to patients with type 2 diabetes.

Recommendations for improvement

- Provide advice more frequently on adverse effects of specific antidiabetic agents such as weight gain with sulfonylureas, glitazones and insulin – only 40% of patients with repeat prescriptions received this advice.
- Remember to counsel patients on what to do for symptoms of low blood sugar – only 35% of patients with first time prescriptions for drugs that can cause hypoglycaemia received this advice.
- Provide some written information such as CMI leaflets or Pharmacy Self Care cards to support verbal counseling – 49% of patients did not receive any written material.
- Recommend patients over 50 years of age discuss the potential benefits of aspirin with their doctor if they were not already using an antiplatelet agent. Only 43% of patients were using antiplatelet agents despite aspirin (75–150 mg daily) being recommended (unless contraindicated) in patients with diabetes who are older than 50 years and/or have established ischaemic heart or cerebrovascular disease and/or have microalbuminuria.³

Conclusions

The 1 107 pharmacists valued participating in the *Drug use in type 2 diabetes* audit. They appreciated the opportunity to:

- identify counselling points in a structured manner for their patients being treated for diabetes
- assess and compare the advice they give to professional practice standards for provision of patient information
- reflect on their priorities for patient counselling
- reinforce NPS *Reducing risk in type 2 diabetes* program key messages received from other health professionals about diabetes management
- compare personal performance to peers on receipt of their feedback report.

References

1. AusDiab 2005: The Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle Study. International Diabetes Institute 2006.
2. Canadian Diabetes Association. Canadian Diabetes Association 2003 clinical practice guidelines for the prevention and management of diabetes in Canada. Can J Diabetes 2003;27 (Suppl 2):S1–S152.
3. Australian Medicines Handbook. Adelaide: Australian Medicines Handbook Pty Ltd; 2005.

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