

Family Medicine Clerkship Plain Language Summary

Title: Type II Diabetes: The Importance of Electronic Medical Records

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Plain Language Summary:

Type II diabetes is an illness where the body does not respond normally to a hormone called insulin. Insulin is a hormone that tells the body to use a sugar called glucose. The body becomes resistant to this signal. In response to this an organ called the pancreas makes more insulin. Eventually the pancreas is unable to continue to make insulin at these high levels and wears out. As a result sugar builds in the body. There can be serious problems if blood sugar is high over months and years. This includes kidney problems, blindness, problems achieving or maintaining an erection, nerve problems, coronary artery disease leading to heart attack, slow wound healing and stroke. Thankfully, with the help of your doctor and clinic these complications can be prevented.

A doctor will get a blood and urine sample and measure blood pressure. This is to measure fat in the blood called cholesterol. There is a bad cholesterol, LDL, that should be below 100mg/dl. If it is above this number a doctor may have you try diet and exercise to lower it or he may start you on a medicine called a statin. A statin lowers the bad cholesterol. Another important test is an A1C. This shows where the average blood sugar level is. If this number is above 8% a medication can be given to lower blood sugar. The urine is needed to measure the health of the kidneys and blood pressure should not be above 140/80 to prevent other complications. If the kidneys are damaged or the blood pressure is elevated medicines can be given that both lowers the blood pressure and protects the kidneys. It is also important to see an eye doctor every year to keep your eyes healthy.

Diabetes is complicated and may require many labs, tests, referrals and prescriptions. The doctor may use a computer or electronic medical record to help organize your care. It has been shown in some studies that doctors who use electronic medical records for diabetes management have healthier patients. This is because the goals of care including blood sugar, blood pressure, cholesterol, medications, and risk reduction are improved. If these risk factors are well controlled many of problems of diabetes are reduced including stroke, kidney problems, heart attack and nerve problems.

Additional Resources:

For more information:

The American Diabetes Association

<http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/type-2/>

Medline Plus:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/diabetes.html>

Mayo Clinic:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/type-2-diabetes/DS00585>

Key Words:

Diabetes Type 2

Hyperglycemia

Pre-diabetes

Insulin

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