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Depression and glycaemic control in Emirati patients with diabetes: how strong is the association?

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Aims: An association between depression and diabetes has been described in several studies. The presence and the strength of this association in the Emirati population is unknown. We have therefore investigated the value of HbA1c as a surrogate marker of depression. We have also aimed to identify patients at higher risk in the population examined.

Methods: In a prospective cohort study, adult Emirati patients with pre-diabetes and diabetes (n = 609) and normal control subjects (n = 85) attending the Imperial College London Diabetes Centre between August and November 2012 had depression screening using an Arabic translation of the PHQ9 depression screening questionnaire. Demographic and metabolic parameters of the same visit were retrieved from patients' medical records. Basic and comparative statistics were performed (SPSS20).

Results: A weakbut highly significant positive correlation was seen between PHQ9 and HbA1c ($p = 0.008$, $r = 0.107$). Women were found to have a significantly higher PHQ9 compared with men (mean $\pm$ SE: 7.26 ± 0.25 vs 4.5 ± 0.34, $p < 0.0001$). Also, patients with age ≤ 40 years, body mass index $\geq 30 kg/m^2$, HbA1c $\geq 10\%$ and those with Type 1 diabetes had a significantly higher depression score. There were no significant correlations between PHQ9 scores and vitamin D level, smoking habit, LDL cholesterol or blood pressure.

Conclusion: In the Emirati patients, younger age, obesity, female gender, Type 1 diabetes and poor glycaemic control were found to be independent risk factors for depression. HbA1c used alone was not a good surrogate indicator of depression in the population studied.

