



Gender and Ethnic Differences in Risk Factors among Adult Subjects with Newly Diagnosed Diabetes

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Introduction: Diabetes mellitus is a major health problem in Kuwait. We carried out this study to investigate the demographic and clinical characteristics of adult subjects with newly diagnosed diabetes.

Methods: We studied characteristics of newly diagnosed diabetics aged 20 years and older who were registered in five primary health care centers with mini-diabetic clinics from the five health regions between April 2005 to March 2006.

Results. Data were available for 932 subjects (618 males, 314 females; 29.0% Kuwaitis, 71.0% expatriates) with a mean age of 46.8 ± 10.4 years. The majority (78.9%) of the patients did not receive college education and about 22.3% were illiterate. The prevalence of current smoking and hypertension was 26.7% and 21.4% respectively. The mean BMI was 29.9 ± 6.5 kg/m², and 48.9% of the patients were physically inactive. The prevalence of illiteracy, physical inactivity, and hypertension was higher among women than men (34.7% vs. 16.0%; 65.1% vs. 40.5%; 33.9% vs. 15.2%, $p < 0.0001$) respectively. Whereas, the prevalence of current smoking was higher among men (36.9% vs. 6.7%, $p < 0.0001$). Women were older (48.0 vs. 46.2 years, $p = .01$), and more obese (BMI 32.9 vs. 28.4 kg/m², $p < 0.0001$) than men. When Kuwaitis were compared to other Arabs and Southeast Asians, the prevalence of physical inactivity was 72.4% vs. 40.8% vs. 37.3%, $p < 0.0001$; current smoking 15.3% vs. 36.9% vs. 22.7%, $p < 0.0001$; and hypertension 22.7% vs. 25.6% vs. 13.7%, $p < 0.01$). Kuwaitis were older (49.2 vs. 46.9 vs. 44.1 years, $p < 0.0001$) and more obese (BMI 32.6 vs. 30.7 vs. 25.9 kg/m², $p < 0.0001$) compared to other Arabs and Southeast Asians. Among Kuwaitis, women were more obese (BMI 34.2 vs. 30.6 kg/m², $p < 0.0001$) and had higher prevalence of physical inactivity (78.4% vs. 65.1%, $p < 0.05$) but had lower prevalence of current smoking (5.4% vs. 27.5%, $p < 0.0001$).

Conclusion: Our findings indicate that there are gender and ethnic differences in risk factors among adult subjects with newly diagnosed diabetes. Obesity and physical inactivity were strikingly prevalent among Kuwaitis, particularly women. These findings suggest that prevention and health education programmes should focus on these factors and consider the differences among different ethnic groups.

Keywords: Diabetes, Risk factors, Kuwait