

Addressing Ophthalmic and Vascular Diabetic Complications in South Asians

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Abstract : South Asians are the fastest-growing immigrant population in Canada and are 3-4 times more likely to develop diabetes. In a primary care setting, language barriers continue to persist as a prominent obstacle when delivering crucial health information. Given the abundance of languages in the South Asian community and the varying levels of English fluency, there is compelling evidence that these language barriers can adversely impact health outcomes. The microvascular and macrovascular complications of poor diabetic management are well established and universally recognized. However, these are often difficult concepts to grasp for even individuals fluent in English. In order to lessen the burden of language barriers, we developed a comprehensive guide in various languages that discuss the complications and screening guidelines for diabetic and prediabetic patients. The guide is presented in the form of a pamphlet, with an electronic version being constructed as well, that provides basic information on diabetic retinopathy, neuropathy and nephropathy as well as the screening recommendations. We also conducted a review of the literature around the topic and incorporated our findings into our project. Our goal is for primary care physicians to have this resource and to be able to provide the link or pamphlet to patients in need. Our presentation also provides a comprehensive overview of some of the other barriers that individuals in the South Asian community face when seeking care. Given the staggering number of individuals in the South Asian community with diabetes and the morbidity and mortality associated with diabetes and its complications, effective community-specific strategies are needed to mitigate the potential consequences of poor diabetes management.

Keywords : diabetes, patient education, ophthalmology, vascular surgery

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