

Monday 14 May 2012

## **Landmark new national study looks at diabetes-related distress, anxiety and depression in Australians with diabetes.**

A new national survey of over 3300 Australians with diabetes has found high levels of diabetes-related distress, anxiety and depression.

The study report, released today by Diabetes Australia, shows adults with type 2 diabetes and using insulin treatment experience the highest levels of depression and anxiety with 35 per cent experiencing moderate to severe depressive symptoms. "With over 200,000 Australians with type 2 diabetes on insulin therapy, this could mean over 70,000 people experiencing moderate to severe depressive symptoms" said Lewis Kaplan, CEO of Diabetes Australia.

"Severe diabetes-related distress is more common in adults with type 1 diabetes, 28 per cent of whom experience signs of severe diabetes-related distress. With over 120,000 Australian adults with type 1 diabetes this could represent over 30,000 people" he said.

Adults with type 2 diabetes are most likely to report complications such as neuropathy, heart disease, vascular disease and sexual dysfunction and they are also more likely to report their health has declined in the past year.

The study was conducted by The Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes and Director, Prof Jane Speight said "this is the first national survey focused on the psychological well-being of people with type 1 and type 2 diabetes. Our findings show the serious levels of diabetes-related distress, anxiety and depression in the everyday lives of Australians with diabetes. With 1.03 million Australians now registered with diabetes on the National Diabetes Services Scheme, this report highlights the serious health burden and impact on wellbeing related to diabetes."

Lewis Kaplan highlighted the issues identified with the healthcare system in the report. "About half of all adults with diabetes, over 500,000 people, have never been offered structured diabetes education to help them live with and cope with diabetes" he said. "And half of all adults with diabetes reported cost was a barrier to their healthcare and half reported they had not been given adequate information from their healthcare professionals in the past 3 months."

Will Bonney of Black Dog Institute says a better state of mental health makes a person stronger to deal with the challenges that living with diabetes entails.

"As someone who has lived with type 1 diabetes for 31 years and encountered the black dog a number of times along the way, I am pleased that attention is being brought to the interplay of depression and diabetes," he says.

Diabetes MILES is an international study, with several European countries also conducting similar surveys. The results of Diabetes MILES – Australia are the first to be released and will be used as a benchmark for future studies in Australia.

## Report findings:

### When it comes to the general health of people with diabetes:

- *Adults with type 2 diabetes are more likely to indicate that their health has declined in the past year, as compared to adults with type 1 diabetes*
- *Adults with type 2 diabetes are also more likely than those with type 1 diabetes to report co-morbidities such as neuropathy, heart disease, peripheral vascular disease, and sexual dysfunction*

### When looking at the psychological and emotional wellbeing of people with diabetes:

- *Adults with type 2 insulin-treated diabetes are more likely to experience symptoms of depression and anxiety than adults with type 1 diabetes or adults with type 2 diabetes who don't use insulin – 35 per cent of adults with type 2 insulin-treated diabetes experience moderate to severe depressive symptoms*
- *Adults with type 1 diabetes are more likely than those with type 2 diabetes to experience severe diabetes-related distress – 28 per cent of adults with type 1 diabetes experience severe distress*

### And what do people with diabetes have to say about the healthcare system?

- *Forty-nine per cent of adults with diabetes have never been offered structured diabetes education. Of those that have received structured education, this is most likely to have occurred at or around the time of diagnosis.*
- *Half of adults with diabetes consider cost to be a barrier to healthcare*
- *Around half of adults with diabetes have not been asked what is important to them in managing their diabetes in the past three months*
- *Half had not received adequate information from their healthcare professionals in the past three months*

### Available for interview:

Diabetes Australia Chief Executive **Lewis Kaplan**

The Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes, Director Professor **Jane Speight**

Diabetes MILES participant **Renza Scibilia**

Black Dog Institute General Manager **Will Bonney**

### Credits:

The Diabetes MILES – Australia 2011 survey was possible thanks to a National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS) Strategic Development Grant. The NDSS is an initiative of the Australian Government, administered by Diabetes Australia.

The Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes is the first national centre in Australia dedicated to investigating the behavioural, psychological and social aspects of diabetes. Established in 2010, the Centre is a partnership for better health between Diabetes Australia – Vic and Deakin University.

Diabetes Australia is the national peak body for diabetes in Australia providing a single, powerful, collective voice for people living with diabetes, their families and carers.

### Note to editors:

Diabetes MILES (Management and Impact for Long-term Empowerment and Success) – Australia was a national survey of Australian adults (aged between 18 and 70 years) living with type 1 or type 2 diabetes. The survey was conducted by post and online in July 2011. Responses from 3,338 people were included in the inaugural MILES report.

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## MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

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