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Media Statement

STUDY HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED STROKE, EYE AND KIDNEY DISEASE RISK IN KIDS DIAGNOSED WITH T1D

A new West Australian study highlights the need to do more to prevent chronic vascular complications stemming from type 1 diabetes, especially in women who develop it during childhood and those with poor blood sugar control in their younger years.

The findings of the Diabetes Research WA-funded study led by Telethon Kids Institute PhD student Matthew Cooper and supervised by Princess Margaret Hospital Children's Diabetes Centre co-director Professor Elizabeth Davis, have just been published in The Journal of Diabetes and Its Complications.

"Micro and macrovascular complications like stroke, diabetic eye disease, and kidney damage remain a reality for those living with type 1 diabetes, despite improvements in insulins, glucose self-monitoring devices, and insulin administration devices," explained Mr Cooper.

"By looking at the health records of more than 1300 West Australians diagnosed with type 1 diabetes in childhood, we discovered that by early adulthood, 32 of these patients had been hospitalised and treated for a vascular complication, mostly eye disease, which can obviously have a huge impact on a person's quality of life.

"We also found rates of end stage kidney disease and stroke were significantly elevated compared to the general population."

Professor Davis said poor blood sugar control during childhood and adolescence was associated with an increased risk of complications in early adulthood.

"On top of this, women, those with low socioeconomic status, and type 1 patients who'd experienced severe hypoglycaemia were at increased risk for developing these complications," he explained.

Diabetes Research WA executive director Sherl Westlund said research such as this had the potential to make a big difference in the lives of those with type 1 diabetes.

"This is the latest work from this team of dedicated researchers; an earlier phase of the study revealed children diagnosed with type 1 diabetes are more than twice as likely to be affected by mental health disorders, such as anxiety, eating, and personality and behaviour disorders, during early adulthood than their peers," she said.

"The group has also found that females with childhood onset type 1 diabetes have an early adulthood mortality rate, before the age of 40, that is 11 times higher than the general population.

"Knowledge is power and this type of research gives us that because if we understand exactly who is most at risk from complications of type 1 diabetes and when and why those issues show up, we can help change the future by allowing doctors and caregivers to intervene earlier to help bring down that risk."

Please visit diabetesresearchwa.com.au or call (08) 9224 1006 for more information.

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