

Reporting

The case history of the concerned patient, Debbie, brings several important points to light.

These points are listed below.

➤ **Diagnosis of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus**

According to patient records, Debbie's income has suffered due to drought as not a lot of people are opting for her cleaning services. This reduction in her income and having to support a family of four has caused her to change her eating habits. Over the years, she has gradually stopped buying fresh fruits and vegetables. Instead she prefers to buy pasta, milk, bread, chocolates, cakes, and soft drinks. Additionally, she consumes two teaspoons of sugar every day with her tea. Studies have shown that people who consume excessive amounts of oil, flour, and sugar are at an increased risk for being diagnosed with diabetes (Sami *et al.*, 2017).

In addition, her asthma does not allow her to exercise. When she was working full-time, she was physically fit; however, she has put on weight in recent times since her work suffered due to drought. It has been strongly indicated that obesity, high BMI, and lack of exercise are more important factors than dietary patterns for the development of diabetes (Rahati *et al.*, 2014).

She has also been stressed lately as she has to use her menial income to support two adult children and one grandchild. When people remain under constant psychological stress, over the time it leads to significant physiological changes in the body, one of them being the onset of diabetes (Falco *et al.*, 2015).

➤ **Ignorance regarding Fluvax**

In 2018, Debbie was diagnosed with influenza and had to spend a week in the hospital. During this time, she learnt about the annual Fluvax vaccine that offers protection against the influenza virus. Had she known about the vaccine earlier, she could have avoided the illness and hospitalization. From this incident, it is evident that Debbie and her family are not aware of the recent medical updates, consequentially leading to acquiring illnesses that could easily have been prevented. In recent times, studies on risk perceptions have proved that having the right amount of medical knowledge leads to a balance in risk perception. This in turn leads to a positive change in lifestyle and diet that can help a person live a longer and healthier life (Buratti and Allwood, 2018).

Personal reflection regarding case details

In my opinion, Debbie's diagnosis of type 2 diabetes mellitus is clearly a consequence of medical ignorance and lack of regular visits to the doctor. The patient's ignorance of the annually available Fluvax vaccine shows that she does not have the requisite knowledge of medical conditions that are currently rampant in the population. Despite this, if she would have gone for regular checkups to her doctor, she would have learnt about the vaccine and taken steps to protect herself from the illness.

With respect to her diabetes, it is clear from her case history that she has been facing major lifestyle changes from quite some time. Her dietary changes, increase in weight and BMI, physical inactivity, and stress are all major pointers for developing diabetes. With the right

amount of information and regular checkups, the diagnosis of diabetes might have been avoided or, at least, delayed.

Relating

➤ **Ignorance about medical conditions**

In my experience, it is quite common to see patients belonging to low income families ignorant about their health status and medical conditions affecting the community. Based on discussions with this type of patients, I have understood that they are physically and emotionally stressed, and rarely have time for recreational activities such as reading newspapers or social activities such as attending community get togethers. On the contrary, patients who have an active social life talk to other people about their health issues and are aware of the risk factors and prevention measures for common health conditions such as obesity and diabetes. Sometimes, they also take the initiative to talk to their doctors about whether they or their family members are at risk for acquiring chronic medical conditions.

➤ **Physical, emotional, and financial stress**

Another thing I have noticed in patients belonging to low income families is that they are under constant stress, and this makes them more vulnerable to acquiring illnesses. Most of the patients in my experience who present with low immunity also have one or more issues going on in their life such as unemployment, supporting a large family with a single income, single parents raising kids, or taking care of dependents. This observation is consistent with the observations of my fellow psychologists who have seen that people going through stress are

more likely to fall sick often. Their lowered immunity makes them vulnerable to seasonal infections such as influenza, and chronic conditions such as diabetes, indigestion, and back pain.

➤ **Unhealthy lifestyle**

Based on my knowledge and observations, I believe that people who are stressed are more likely to lead an unhealthy lifestyle such as eat large amounts of junk food and rarely exercise. Often, when these people manage to reverse their situation, they lead better physical and social lives thus improving their quality of life. In the concerned case history of Debbie, it is clear that the stress of making less money and supporting two children and a grandchild are taking a toll on her health. Her immunity has decreased as is evident by Debbie being diagnosed with influenza and spending a week in the hospital. Additionally, her financial situation has led to physical inactivity and consumption of flour and sugar, both of which are important risk factors for type 2 diabetes.

Reasoning

In the given case history, there are several social and cultural factors that are playing a role in Debbie's health status. These factors are individually analyzed below.

➤ **Unemployment**

Several studies have shown that unemployment is directly related to ill health in people. It may lead to a myriad of physical and mental health conditions, early death, or unhealthy habits such as increased alcohol consumption, smoking, or even drug abuse. In several regions around the

world, it has been proven that unemployment affects women more than men with the onset of various mental health conditions. However, this depends on the amount of unemployment support provided to these people by the state, and unemployed people who get more support are less likely to fall sick (Bjorklund *et al.*, 2014).

Although Debbie has a lot of family members living close by, it does not seem as if she is getting financial support from any of them. One of her adult children is unemployed and living with her, and another is a single parent earning a minimal amount. Her own income has been largely affected due to drought, and she is unable to spend or save as much as she could earlier. Hence, it is evident that all these factors have led to increased stress and, consequentially, poor health.

➤ **Water crisis**

Debbie's town of residence, Walgett in New South Wales, is currently facing a water crisis due to extreme drought. This has affected both the economy of the region as well as availability of clean drinking water. Walgett's government has recently shifted from tap water to bore water in order to ensure that every house in the region has sufficient drinking water. However, there have been several complaints that the taste and smell of bore water is foul, and people have started drinking less water than normal. Debbie has also complained of the taste, and has started replacing water with tea.

It is a known fact that drinking sufficient quantity of clean water every day is very important to the overall physical and mental health of a person. It leads to physiological balance in the body

and increased immunity. As Debbie has subconsciously lowered her intake of water, this could be an important factor related to her poor health and vulnerability to seasonal infections.

➤ **Lifestyle changes**

Debbie has undergone several lifestyle changes in the recent months, which are both direct and indirect consequences of other factors such as unemployment and financial stress. One of the important lifestyle changes is decrease in physical activity, leading to increase in weight and fatigue. A decrease in physical exercise and an increase in weight are both important determinants for acquiring diabetes. Studies show that obesity is the strongest factor for diabetes and 90% of people suffering from diabetes have a BMI of more than 25 (Kahan, 2017).

Chronic stress is also related to unhealthy eating habits in people due to the secretion of the hormone, cortisol, which significantly increases the appetite in these people. Studies have also shown an increased secretion of the hormones cortisol and insulin in the urine of people undergoing stress (El-Aziz *et al.*, 2014). In the concerned case history, financial stress in Debbie's family have led to her buying large amounts of unhealthy foods such as flour, sugar, cakes, chocolates, and soft drinks. This practice has significantly deteriorated her health and immunity, and led to her diagnosis of diabetes.

Reconstructing

➤ **Prevention of diabetes through programs and activities**

The most important aspect of management of chronic conditions is their prevention. Debbie's is clearly a case of neglect, ignorance, and lifestyle factors that could have been avoided with the

right management strategies. In order to ensure prevention of diabetes in patients like Debbie, it is important for every region to prepare and implement diabetes prevention programs in various community and healthcare settings. The objectives of this program should be simple to understand, cost-effective, and easy to implement. Technology-based assistance can also be provided to patients who are at an increased risk for diabetes (American Diabetes Association, 2018). These types of programs will ensure that every person is aware of the risk factors of diabetes and can take appropriate steps to protect the health of themselves and their family members.

➤ **Understanding the social and cultural context of a patient**

When addressing diabetes in a patient, it becomes essential to understand the patient's living conditions, state of employment, food and water status, familial issues, and social life. As diabetes is largely a lifestyle-dependent condition, an understanding of the patient's lifestyle will provide a lot of insight into the events and habits that contributed to the diagnosis of diabetes. By doing this, treatment and management of diabetes can be personalized for the patient, so that the prognosis becomes better and the patient leads a healthier life (American Diabetes Association, 2019).

➤ **Regular testing for prediabetes and diabetes**

Regular testing should be performed for people who are at an increased risk for diabetes. One of the important risk factors for diabetes is obesity, and as per the case history details, Debbie has a BMI of 28. This predisposes her to diabetes, and patients belonging to her category should undergo constant monitoring for additional risk factors and/or symptoms of diabetes.

This will ensure that diabetes is diagnosed at a very early stage and immediate implementation of management strategies can help patients avoid the complications of diabetes (American Diabetes Association, 2019).

➤ **Lifestyle interventions**

Once a patient is diagnosed with prediabetes or diabetes, it is essential to tailor a lifestyle intervention regime to try and reverse some of the effects of diabetes. These interventions include weight loss, physical activity, and dietary changes. A patient diagnosed with diabetes usually needs to go through behavioral weight loss therapy which includes components of nutrition, walking, and physical activity. A low-calorie and low-fat diet needs to be planned out with the patient and adherence to the diet needs to be ensured through follow-up sessions (American Diabetes Association, 2019).

➤ **Pharmacologic interventions**

Based on the status of diabetes in the patient, an appropriate pharmacological therapy needs to be charted out for the patient. Metformin therapy is the most commonly used drug for the prevention and management of diabetes, and it has the best prognosis among all other drugs. This therapy, combined with appropriate lifestyle changes can help a diabetes patient lead a better and healthier life (American Diabetes Association, 2019).

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