Need for glucometer for older adults with diabetes in times of pandemic

Necesidad de glucómetro para los adultos mayores con diabetes en tiempos de pandemia

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ABSTRACT. Face to health emergency by the pandemic caused by COVID19, considering confinement measures, the situation of older adults suffering from diabetes is reflected. They need to have knowledge of many aspects of their disease: drug treatment, proper feeding, exercise, regular laboratory checks and medical checks. Within this, self-monitoring of capillary blood glucose is essential, which should be one of the first skills that each patient diagnosed with diabetes mellitus must acquire to know their level of glycemia. This test is done in the simplest way using the glucometer. That is why it is recommended that the older adult have a glucometer at home and that, in addition to monitoring; receive with your family guidance on their handling, care and alarm signs.

Keywords: Diabetes mellitus, aged, blood glucose, home health nursing.

RESUMEN. Frente a la emergencia sanitaria por la pandemia ocasionada por el COVID19, considerando las medidas de confinamiento, se reflejona sobre la situación de los adultos mayores que sufren diabetes. Ellos necesitan tener conocimientos sobre muchos aspectos de su enfermedad: el tratamiento farmacológico, la alimentación adecuada, ejercicio, controles periódicos de laboratorio y controles médicos. Dentro de ello, es básico el automonitoreo de glucemia capilar, que debería constituirse en una de las primeras destrezas que cada paciente con diagnóstico de diabetes mellitus debe adquirir para conocer su nivel de glicemia. Este examen se realiza de la manera más sencilla mediante el glucometro. Por eso se recomienda la necesidad de que el adulto mayor cuente con un glucometro en casa y que, además de la monitorizació; reciba junto a su familia, las orientaciones sobre su manejo, cuidados y signos de alarma.

Palabras clave: Diabetes mellitus, anciano, glucemia, cuidados de enfermería en el hogar.

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INTRODUCTION

Diabetes mellitus is one of the greatest global health emergencies of the 21st century, ranking among the top ten causes of death. According to the Diabetes Association of Peru (Adiper), “Some 400,000 older adults in Peru suffer from diabetes, which is equivalent to 11% of the total population.”

People with diabetes, especially older adults, need to be knowledgeable about many aspects of their disease: drug treatment, proper nutrition, exercise, regular laboratory checks and medical monitoring. One of the most important of these is the self-monitoring of capillary blood glucose, which should be one of the first skills that every patient with a diagnosis of diabetes mellitus should acquire in order to know his or her glycemia level. This test is performed in the simplest way by means of the glucometer.

It has been 49 years since the discovery of the glucometer and it has become one of the main advances in the treatment of diabetes: the capillary glucose meter. The glucometer has been improved during the last years, due to new technologies. It has been demonstrated that patients who frequently control their blood glucose level have lower levels of glycosylated hemoglobin.

Patients must know all the therapeutic methods to control their own health. For this reason, the glucometer must be, above all, accurate and precise, offering reliable results at all times. It is easy to use, with large numbers and allows the last glucose values to be recorded. Now with the technology, it even allows us to record in software and send results to your doctor in order to facilitate decision making.

Currently, in Peru, older adults who live with diabetes mellitus, with daily treatment of oral hypoglycemic or insulin, do not have an obligatory glucometer at home. Generally, only the patient who has economic resources will be able to buy a glucometer.

As of today, we do not have actual studies and statistics on how many older adults have a glucometer at home. Apparently, a small percentage of older adults who have this instrument use it to control their glucose values according to their schedule and to be able to make a self-assessment, make decisions in their treatment: exercise, medication or insulin, food, and in this way, avoid possible complications that could occur if the values are above or below the recommended.

According to Supreme Decree No. 008-2020 – MINSA (Ministry of Health), Peru was declared a national health emergency as of March 11, 2020, the date on which regular appointments were no longer attended: specialty medical consultations, nursing and other health professionals, leading to greater risk of complications for older adults with diabetes because most hospitals are providing care only for patients diagnosed with COVID 19, leaving aside the care normally intended for diabetic patients.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, especially in the context of the current pandemic, it is recommended that every older adult with diabetes have a glucometer at home and be allowed to learn how to use it. Similarly, a family member or caregiver should be assigned to follow up with a log on a schedule. Nursing professionals should perform biweekly or weekly telephone monitoring to promote self-care at home during this period of confinement. This equipment can even save the life of an older adult with hypoglycemia by acting within minutes from home.

In Peru, it is necessary that policies be implemented in favor of all older adults and that they be given a glucometer to register their glycemia. In this way, we would be controlling diabetes and contributing to improve the quality of life of the elderly. Therefore, with this measure, we would avoid complications that represent greater costs for the patient, their families, and for the State.

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES


