



Ten Misconceptions on Diabetes

1) Diabetes is not a disease that kills: FALSE

In fact, diabetes is a global killer that rivals HIV/AIDS in its deadly reach. The disease kills some 3.8 million people every year. Every 10 seconds somebody dies from causes related to diabetes.

2) Diabetes only affects the rich countries: FALSE

Diabetes is everywhere and is beyond national income. Currently more than 240 million people have diabetes. In many countries of Asia, the Middle East, and the Caribbean, diabetes affects between 12 and 20% of their populations. And by 2025, 80% of all cases will be in low- and middle-income countries.

3) Diabetes can count on robust global funding: FALSE

Official foreign aid (from the USA) for the health sector in 2002 reach 2.9 billion dollars (US), of which hardly 0.1% were allocated to financing ALL chronic noncommunicable diseases (CNCDs). Most of these 2.9 billion dollars was used to fight the challenge of HIV/AIDS. Despite the fact that diabetes has a global impact and mortality comparable to HIV/AIDS, its funding was a meagre 0.1% of all funding for CNCDs.

4) Diabetes care is not expensive: FALSE

Diabetes care is indeed costly and potentially could seriously affect any healthcare system. The economic opportunities that the United Nations wants to create for the developing countries through its Millennium Development Objectives (MDGs) are seriously countered by the economic impact of diabetes in low- and middle-income countries.

5) Diabetes only affects the elderly: FALSE

In reality, diabetes affects all age groups. It is currently estimated that 246 million people in the age group from 20 to 79 years will get diabetes. In the developing countries, diabetes affects at least 80 million people between 40 and 59 years of age. In many countries of Asia, the Middle East, Oceania, and the Caribbean, diabetes affects between 12 and 20% of the adult population.

6) Diabetes predominantly affects men: FALSE

In fact, diabetes is growing among both men and women, affecting slightly more women than men.

7) Diabetes is not preventable: FALSE

Even if it is true that type 1 diabetes is not preventable, nearly 80% of type 2 diabetes can be prevented with a health diet and by increasing physical activity and promoting healthy lifestyles.

8) Diabetes is the result of unhealthy lifestyles: FALSE

The truth is that poor people and children have limited options when it comes to their living conditions, diet, and education.

9) Diabetes prevention is too expensive: FALSE

There are many interventions that are not expensive for cost-effective prevention. Strategies of proven efficiency, such as improving people's living conditions, changes in diet, and an increase in physical activity can reverse the epidemic.

10) We all have to die from something. TRUE, but ...

Death is an inevitable fact of life, but it does not have to be a slow, painful, or premature one. Diabetes causes 3.8 million deaths every year. With awareness, prevention, and appropriate care, many of these deaths can be avoided.