



THE GEORGE INSTITUTE
for International Health

MEDIA RELEASE
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Study Reveals High Rate of Diabetes in Rural India

Populations in rural India may be set for an epidemic of diabetes according to new research conducted by The George Institute for International Health and published today in *Diabetes Care*. In a large-scale survey of rural India, 13% of adults aged 30 or above were found to have diabetes in a developing area of Andhra Pradesh with a further 16% exhibiting features of pre-diabetes.

Prior studies have highlighted the escalating problem of diabetes in urban India however, high quality information about health in rural areas is scarce. While the villages enrolled in this study are more developed than many rural regions, these results clearly indicate the new health problems that much of rural India will face in the coming decade.

Associate Professor Bruce Neal, a Senior Director at The George Institute explained that "These results confirm the speed with which health transition is occurring in even quite rural areas of India. The growth of conditions like diabetes is going to drive a huge increase in heart disease and stroke in regions that are not well equipped to deal with these diseases," he said.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for more than 16 million deaths annually. The majority of these deaths now occur in developing countries. Because cardiovascular diseases occur earlier in life in developing regions, the economic impact is enormous. It is estimated these conditions will trim more than 1% from India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2015.

The George Institute study, conducted in 20 villages from the Godavari regions of Andhra Pradesh, sampled over 4,500 individuals. Of those with known diabetes, 67% were taking sugar lowering tablets, 3% were using insulin, and 46% were taking blood pressure lowering agents.

"These relatively high levels of treatment suggest that, even in fairly poor rural settings, proven effective treatment is highly accessible. Low-cost strategies to improve detection and treatment rates could therefore produce substantial health benefits," added Professor Neal.

Dr Krishnam Raju, Chair of the CARE Foundation echoed Professor Neal's comments, noting that in India, as in many other developing countries, chronic diseases are fast becoming the leading health problem. "The generation of new evidence about detection and management strategies suited to resource poor settings is an urgent public health priority for India," Dr Raju said.

This study of the prevalence and management of diabetes in rural India was completed as part of the Andhra Pradesh Rural Health Initiative (APRHI). This initiative is a collaboration between The George Institute and The University of Queensland in Australia, the Byrraju Foundation, the Centre for Chronic Disease Control (CCDC) and the CARE Foundation in India. Since 2003, the APRHI group has worked to identify the main health problems in the region and to develop evidence-based methods of dealing with them.

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