

**DIETARY COMPLIANCE AMONGST PATIENTS WITH TYPE 2 DIABETES
MELLITUS AT THE SAN FERNANDO GENERAL HOSPITAL IN TRINIDAD AND
TOBAGO**

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Background: Diabetes mellitus is a growing problem in Trinidad and Tobago, with one in five adults having this condition. Due to this high prevalence, it is crucial that this health issue be addressed. Even with programmes in place at the San Fernando General Hospital, such as the Diabetes Association in Trinidad and Tobago (DATT), improvements are not being seen within this population. There are various reasons why some of these patients fare better than others, chief among which is diet.

Objective: To identify the factors that affect dietary compliance amongst patients with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus at the San Fernando General Hospital in Trinidad and Tobago.

Study design: This study was cross-sectional. The research instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire with a total of twenty-seven (27) questions. Data was collected during February and March 2013. The sample was taken from the San Fernando General Hospital, Independence Avenue, San Fernando, Trinidad and Tobago. A non-random sample of sixty (60) participants was conveniently selected based on their location of being on the wards of the hospital, all of whom were diagnosed with type 2 diabetes mellitus.

Results: A majority of clients (70%) were required by a doctor to seek dietary counselling and subsequently received dietary counselling by a dietitian (72%). A little more than half of the sample (55%) reported complying or adhering to their recommended diet most of the time. While it was not possible to directly measure cholesterol levels, based on 'fast food' intake, it can be estimated that a quarter of the sample population (23.3%) were at risk for elevated cholesterol levels.

Dietary compliance seemed to be affected by education level since those who were educated up to secondary school (57%) demonstrated a greater understanding of their diet (59%) as evidenced by the highest rates of compliance (59%) with their diet. This amount comprises of

those who complied most of the time (54.5%) and all of the time (4.5%). Another factor that influenced food consumption was cost which was seen as important by 85% of those surveyed.

Conclusion: The San Fernando General Hospital is meeting its goal of acceptable levels of dietary compliance to an extent among patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus since more than half of the patients are complying with their recommended diets. The persons who are complying with their diets are the ones who show understanding of their diet in the first place. Level of education seemed to have an influence on this understanding.