

# DIABETES: AN EVER-GROWING PROBLEM

MEMBERS' CORNER

TRICIA MICALLEF

**D**iabetes is a condition, which, if tackled properly can be controlled, allowing the patient to have a relatively normal quality of life. However, if left unattended, complications can be life-threatening.

According to the International Diabetes Foundation, in 2014 there were 35,200 cases of diabetes in Malta, this not including those with impaired glucose tolerance and impaired fasting glucose, which can both lead to diabetes. This leaves Malta with the second highest percentage of diabetes in the Mediterranean, surpassed only by Cyprus.

Due to the increasing problem of diabetes incidence in the Maltese islands, we must try to educate the general public as early as possible about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle with an emphasis on preventive measures.

Prevention of type 2 diabetes occurs mainly through lifestyle changes such as physical activity and healthy eating. Apart from the psychological benefits, physical activity aids in maintaining weight loss, reducing blood pressure and heart rate, and increasing insulin sensitivity.



Risk factors to avoid include smoking, which increases abdominal fat accumulation and insulin resistance, and stress/depression which may be linked to both diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Sleep deprivation (< 6 hours) impairs the balance of hormones regulating food intake and energy balance, whilst sleeping too much (> 9 hours) may also be associated with a higher risk of diabetes.

As our contribution to this education, the Malta Pharmaceutical Students' Association (MPSA) holds numerous health campaigns where free blood glucose testing, blood pressure and BMI screening are carried out.

Furthermore, an annual diabetes campaign is held during World Diabetes Day. At these events, information material is given out in order to prompt the public's interest for further reading on the disease and its prevention as well as instill healthy lifestyle changes ❄️