

THE RISKS OF AGGRESSIVE BLOOD SUGAR CONTROL

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When given intensive treatment to control the blood sugar levels to near normal levels, they had more heart attacks, strokes and all other causes of deaths than those who were treated less aggressively.

Chronic kidney disease

Many diabetics also develop chronic kidney disease or CKD secondary to diabetic nephropathy, which make them more prone to hypoglycemia and its attendant complications. Once they develop CKD, it may progress to end-stage renal disease (ESRD), requiring lifelong dialysis or kidney transplantation.

T2DM is the major culprit why people require lifelong dialysis or kidney transplantation. This is the reason checking for protein spillage in the urine (microalbuminuria) at least once a year is important in detecting the onset of CKD early enough for treatment of the diabetes and blood pressure.

It may seem ironic, but hypoglycemia is actually linked to increased weight gain in diabetics. Dr. Litonjua explained that relatively low blood sugar levels cause “defensive eating” in diabetics, and they may not realize they’re putting on weight. Weight gain is a common side effect of several commonly used antidiabetic agents. So, if the patient is overweight:

New classes of drugs

To prevent hypoglycemia and weight gain in diabetics, the newer classes of drugs like the DPP4 (dipeptidyl peptidase-4) inhibitors, GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide-1), and the SGLT2 (sodium glucose cotransporter-2) are preferred.

To improve further the longterm outlook (prognosis) of the heart and kidneys of diabetics, experts also recommend the use of a renin-angiotensin (RAS) blocker, specifically an angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor or an angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB). Statins, which are generally prescribed for patients with elevated cholesterol levels, should also be given to all diabetics even if their cholesterol levels are normal because of benefits for diabetics not related to the drug’s cholesterol-lowering effects.

For those with chest pains or other symptoms of coronary artery disease (CAD) due to narrowing of the heart arteries, blood thinners (antiplatelet agents) like good old aspirin will also be beneficial.

For those who wish to know more about understanding, preventing and treating diabetes, call the Philippine Center for Diabetes Education Foundation at tel. 88892106.