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Type 2 diabetes mellitus management in primary care: can Romania learn from the British system?

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Background & Aim: In Romania a total of 1.5 million diabetic patients are monitored by 386 specialist diabetologists. Romania, like most other 1st world countries, is experiencing a rising prevalence of diabetes mellitus and this has led to an increase in the diabetologists' workload and limited patients' access to diabetic care, resulting in a higher prevalence of disease complications. Our aim is to find and implement a solution for better patient management by comparing the Romanian model for diabetic care with that in other European countries.

Method: We studied the national guidelines for care of type 2 diabetes and compared how these were implemented in Romania and the UK. In particular we compared how regulations that the respective health ministries imposed on GPs affected diabetic management.

Results: Both Romania and the UK have diabetes guidelines, but Romanian legislation only permits GPs to prescribe the oral antidiabetic drugs recommended by the diabetologists. The rules also limit the number of investigations available to patients under the national health insurance scheme and in particular they do not allow GPs to order HbA1c blood tests, which are generally regarded as the gold standard for evaluating diabetic patients' care. By comparison, in the UK the GP has a key role in diagnosing and monitoring the type 2 diabetes patient and initiating and adjusting oral treatment to best limit disease complications.

Conclusions: We suggest that Romanian GPs should be provided with the same practical facilities that are enjoyed by their British colleagues and that Romania should move towards a system where most type 2 diabetics are routinely managed in primary care. We propose a pilot project to evaluate the impact of such changes.