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Secondary prevention of diabetic retinopathy in patients with diabetes in a rural area of Greece

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Background & Aim: To determine if normoglycemic diabetic patients are receiving the recommended secondary prevention care in order to avoid or treat in time diabetic retinopathy according to the standards of medical care, in a rural area of Greece, disposing of a health center, but deprived of the necessary tools for funduscopy examination (Greek reality).

Method: We used balanced questionnaires (Cronbach alpha 0.907) in normoglycemic diabetic patients that are monitored by GPs in the health center, for regular follow-up of their disease (586 patients). As normoglycemic were considered patients with HbA1C<7% and also patients with 7%<HbA1C<8% in cases of insulin treated patients with multiple commorbidity and/or complications.

Results: 390 (66,55%) of the participating diabetic patients were found normoglycemic. of those, only 82 (21,03%), were following the guidelines carrying out a funduscopy yearly. Analysis of the questionnaire showed statistically significant correlation ($p<0,05$) in responses to the causes of missing regular funduscopy examination in relation with: a) Long waiting lists in public health care facilities ($U=2615$, $p=0.021$) and b) Long distance from urban health care facilities with funduscopy possibility ($U=2131$, $p=0.019$). Statistically significant correlation ($p<0,05$) was also found in the question to that would incite them to have a regular funduscopy examination, in relation with the response of undertaking the examination within the premises of the health center ($U=2631$, $p=0.021$).

Conclusions: Most diabetic patients achieving good glycemic control don't follow guidelines for further yearly funduscopy examination. The feasibility of funduscopy in the local health center would help improve patients' compliance, provided that tools for funduscopy examination are available. In this case given the good glycemic control, that prevents secondary complications, a better patient compliance will be also achieved following the recommendations for early treatment of a possible diabetic retinopathy.