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Diabetic retinopathy screening in primary care: can we prevent blindness in our diabetic patients?

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Background and Aim: The prevalence of diabetes mellitus in adults over 18 years is about 12% in Spain. Between 20 and 26% of diabetic patients have diabetic retinopathy. New technological developments allow diagnoses and monitoring of most of the patients on the primary care level, with the main aim of preventing blindness in the patients.

Method: We present the project carried out in a rural health centre in Valladolid, Spain, with 500 diabetic patients studied by a teleophthalmology system, in a coordinated way between primary care professionals and ophthalmology specialists. Patients who accept be included in the programme sign the informed consent document, and are examined using the retinograph, under pharmacological mydriasis. Professionals take photos of three fields of the fundus of the eye: central, superior and nasal, and the images are sent to the ophthalmologist, who diagnoses the presence or the absence of diabetic retinopathy and the conduct to follow. Patients without diabetic retinopathy or with mild degree of diabetic retinopathy are monitored in the health centre by primary care professionals, and patients with moderate or severe degrees are sent to the specialist. Besides, in the health centre, patients are questioned about the presence of other risk factors (hypertension, tobaccoism, hyperlipidemia) and about the time of evolution and their diabetes control degree, in order to study the interrelationship between the illness and these factors.

Results: Its will be presented at the Conference.

Conclusions: Based on the results obtained we can compare data of prevalence with other similar studies and implement measures to improve control degree of our patients in order to prevent cardiovascular complications. Besides, we will be avoiding unnecessary referrals of the patients to specialists and will be contributing to avoid the reference centres masification.