Time 2 Do More Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (T2DM QUERI): Patient age, ethnicity, medical history and risk factor profile, but not drug insurance coverage, predict successful attainment of glycemic targets

Running Title: Predictors for A1C improvement

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Predictors for A1C improvement

**Objective**– To identify factors, in patients with Type 2 diabetes and glycated haemoglobin (A1C)>7.0%, associated with A1C≤7.0% attainment.

**Research design and methods**– Prospective registry of 5280 Canadian patients in primary care settings enrolled in a 12-months glycemic pharmacotherapy optimization strategy based on national guidelines.

**Results**– At close out, median A1C was 7.1% (versus 7.8% at baseline) with 48% of subjects achieving A1C≤7.0% (P<0.0001). Older patients of Asian or black origins, those with longer diabetes duration, lower baseline A1C, BMI, LDL-C and BP, and those on angiotensin receptor blockers and a lower number of antihyperglycemic agents, were more likely to achieve A1C≤7.0% at some point during the study (all P<0.0235). Access to private versus public drug coverage did not impact on glycemic target realization.

**Conclusions**– Patient demography, cardiometabolic health and ongoing pharmacotherapy, but not access to private drug insurance coverage, contribute to the care gap in Type 2 diabetes.

Treatment gaps in achieving A1C targets persist (1, 2). Our goal was to identify, in a Type 2 diabetes patient registry, factors that contribute to attaining the 2003 Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA) clinical practice guidelines (3) recommended A1C target of ≤7.0%.

**RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

The "Time 2 Do More (T2DM)" protocol underwent ethics approval. Physicians were educated on the 2003 CDA guidelines which focussed on A1C≤7.0%, FPG≤7.0mmol/l, LDL-C≤2.5mmol/l, TC:HDL-C <4.0 and blood pressure (BP)≤130/80mmHg.

The final 5280 insulin-naive patients, enrolled from 378 primary care practices across 9 Canadian provinces between March 2006 and September 2007, had A1C>7.0% and a clinical diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes. Participation was voluntary and written informed consent mandatory. Protocol sub-classification into Private (unencumbered access to any antihyperglycemic agent (AHA)) or Public (access only to AHA approved by provincial formulary programs) insurance groups was met by 4797 patients (376 sites, 9 provinces).

Physicians monitored and directed therapies based on their best clinical judgement. The protocol neither mandated the frequency or timing of clinical visits, nor dictated the specific medications or doses to be prescribed. Subjects not at A1C target at follow-up were encouraged to have their antihyperglycemic treatment intensified. Detailed feedback provided after Visit-2 allowed physicians to identify those not at target and/or not receiving guideline-recommended treatments.

Laboratory values were obtained as part of routine clinical care.

A GEE model was fitted to assess association between increase in number of prescribed AHA at each visit and changes in A1C target achievement. Model selection was based on the Quasi-likelihood under the Independence model Criterion (4). The final model was utilized to assess association between drug insurance coverage and changes in target achievement.

**RESULTS**

The cohort was 58.2% men and 74.9% Caucasian. Median age, baseline A1C, LDL-C and BP were 60 years, 7.8%, 2.3mmol/l and 130/80mmHg respectively. Median duration of diabetes was 6 years with 18%, 5.5% and 4.8% of the cohort respectively reporting prior coronary artery, peripheral vascular and cerebrovascular disease events. Sequential declines in A1C (median 7.1% at close out; P<0.0001) paralleled progressive increases in A1C≤7.0% attainments.
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Of the 3122 patients who had A1C measured at all 4 visits, 35.9% did not achieve A1C ≤ 7.0% at any time during the study. Median FPG, lipid levels and BP improved temporally as did the percentages of patients optimally managed (Online Table 1).

Patients on multiple AHAs increased while those on monotherapy decreased during the study (Online Table 2). After adjusting for age and the covariates that were significant in the multivariable model, the number of AHAs prescribed at each previous visit remained significantly associated with target achievement during the study (Table 1). Older patients of Asian origin or blacks, those with longer diabetes duration, lower baseline A1C, BMI, LDL-C or BP, and patients on angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs) and with lower number of AHAs prescribed, were more likely to achieve A1C target at some period during the study (all P<0.0235). Differential access to drug insurance coverage was not associated with changes in glycemic target achievement in univariate (P=0.64) and multivariable (P=0.24) analyses.

DISCUSSION
In this physician practice optimization strategy focused on optimizing AHA regimens, <50% of the patients recorded A1C≤7.0% 12-months after entering the study. Multivariable analysis revealed that A1C≤7.0% was associated with age, ethnicity, baseline A1C, BMI, LDL-C or BP, and use of ARBs and number of AHAs.

While the predictive values of demography and cardiometabolic health on A1C improvements were not unexpected, the suboptimal success in A1C realization is intriguing since a quarter of the patients were already or subsequently placed on ≥3 AHAs at baseline. Clinical inertia (5, 6), in the form of delayed insulin introduction, was likely contributory. At the time of the study, although there was evidence that tight glycemic control can ameliorate microvascular complications (7, 8), there were no similar data for macrovascular risk which may have factored into physician decision making. The paradox that patients on a lower number of AHAs were more likely to achieve A1C target probably stemmed from patients with “more severe” diabetes being more likely to be prescribed multiple AHAs.

Our finding that private insurance-enabled unencumbered access to any AHA did not impact on A1C≤7.0% achievement must be interpreted cautiously since at the time of this study, thiazolidinediones were the only major class of AHAs not covered by the majority of Canadian provincial formularies. Notably, patients with public only coverage were less likely than those with private insurance to be on thiazolidinediones at the beginning of the study but this discrepancy was no longer evident after Visit-2.

This study has several limitations. An element of physician selection bias is likely since a quarter of the patients at baseline were either already on or placed on ≥3 AHAs. Although only 59% of the patients had complete data for all four visits, study participation may have triggered improvements. Neither lifestyle modifications and social support systems nor co-management by a specialist were documented. Information on AHA prescriptions and therapeutic profiles were drawn from CRFs versus pharmacy records.

Our study nonetheless has notable strengths. The data were from a large cohort and included both genders of various ethnicities with differential drug insurance coverage. The longitudinal registry design resembles a “real world” setting without the typical clinical trial selection bias. Our study was initiated and completed before the results of the major outcome trials that have fuelled the controversies of how intensive glycemic lowering impacts on severe hypoglycemia and cardiovascular events (9-12) were published and thus may serve as a useful benchmark for future comparisons of how practice patterns may evolve.

In conclusion, in a large Canadian cohort of Type 2 diabetes patients not
meeting glycemic targets, nearly 50% achieved the guidelines-recommended A1Cs≤7.0% target after 12-months in a physician-based practice optimization strategy. Success in realizing target A1C was associated with patient age, ethnicity, baseline A1C, LDL-C, BP, duration of diabetes, number of AHAs prescribed and use of ARBs but not type of drug insurance coverage.

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### Table 1 – Factors associated with temporal changes in A1C ≤7.0% achievement

| Demographic                        | Unadjusted OR (95% CI) | P value | Adjusted OR (95% CI) | P value |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|
| Men vs. Women                     | 0.996 (0.992, 1.076)   | 0.93    |                      |         |
| Age (per 5 years higher)          | 1.029 (1.012, 1.045)   | 0.0006  | 1.024 (1.003, 1.046) | 0.0235  |
| Ethnicity (Caucasian as reference)|                        |         |                      |         |
| East and South-East Asian         | 0.764 (0.667, 0.874)   | <0.0001 | 0.715 (0.606, 0.842) | <0.0001 |
| South Asian                       | 0.592 (0.500, 0.701)   | <0.0001 | 0.641 (0.528, 0.779) | <0.0001 |
| Black                             | 0.651 (0.519, 0.816)   | 0.0002  | 0.71 (0.548, 0.920)  | 0.0095  |
| Aboriginal Canadian native/Inuit  | 0.699 (0.517, 0.945)   | 0.02    | 0.867 (0.604, 1.244) | 0.44    |
| Others                            | 0.945 (0.710, 1.260)   | 0.701   | 0.903 (0.657, 1.241) | 0.53    |
| Unknown                           | 0.670 (0.512, 0.876)   | 0.0035  | 0.651 (0.464, 0.913) | 0.0129  |
| Insurance coverage (Private vs. Public) | 0.979 (0.895, 1.070) | 0.64    |                      |         |

| Clinical variables                | Unadjusted OR (95% CI) | P value | Adjusted OR (95% CI) | P value |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|
| Baseline A1C (per 1% lower)       | 1.368 (1.301, 1.438)   | <0.0001 | 1.344 (1.273, 1.419) | <0.0001 |
| LDL cholesterol (per 1mmol/l lower)* | 1.412 (1.340, 1.487) | <0.0001 | 1.349 (1.275, 1.427) | <0.0001 |
| Systolic blood pressure (per 10mmHg lower)* | 1.121 (1.093, 1.151) | <0.0001 | 1.101 (1.063, 1.140) | <0.0001 |
| Diastolic blood pressure (per 10mmHg lower)* | 1.202 (1.154, 1.251) | <0.0001 | 1.09 (1.031, 1.153)  | 0.0024  |
| Baseline BMI (per 5kg/m² lower)   | 1.041 (1.013, 1.071)   | 0.0044  | 1.044 (1.008, 1.081) | 0.0158  |

| Medical history                   | Unadjusted OR (95% CI) | P value | Adjusted OR (95% CI) | P value |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|
| Duration of type 2 diabetes mellitus (per 5 years lower) | 1.239 (1.193, 1.287) | <0.0001 | 1.451 (1.375, 1.532) | <0.0001 |
| Smoker (No vs. Yes)               | 1.071 (0.948, 1.210)   | 0.27    |                      |         |
| Exercise vs. Sedentary lifestyle  | 1.033 (0.956, 1.115)   | 0.41    |                      |         |
| Family history of diabetes mellitus (No vs. Yes) | 1.086 (1.007, 1.172) | 0.033   |                      |         |

| Pharmacotherapy                   | Unadjusted OR (95% CI) | P value | Adjusted OR (95% CI) | P value |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|
| Number of AHAs (per unit lower)*  | 1.176 (1.129, 1.224)   | <0.0001 | 1.326 (1.256, 1.399) | <0.0001 |
| Statin (Yes vs. No)               | 1.223 (1.112, 1.344)   | <0.0001 |                      |         |
| Angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor (Yes vs. No) | 1.052 (0.976, 1.135) |   0.19   |                      |         |
| Angiotensin receptor blocker (Yes vs. No)* | 1.241 (1.145, 1.346) | <0.0001 | 1.246 (1.133, 1.370) | <0.0001 |
| Beta blocker (Yes vs. No)         | 1.090 (0.993, 1.198)   | 0.072   |                      |         |

*Time-dependent variables