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Diabetes in School Science Curriculum in India

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Type 1 diabetes mellitus (T1DM) is one of the most common pediatric endocrine illnesses. The incidence of T1DM continues to increase worldwide, and has serious short- and long-term implications. According to the latest data presented by the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), globally, nearly 96,000 new children are diagnosed to have T1DM every year.[1] Of these, more than half are living in developing nations, with India being home to an estimated 97,700 children with T1DM[2] and adding 11,300 new cases annually (onset < 15 years).[1]

Available Indian data reveal different opinions regarding the prevalence of T1DM in the country. Whereas Chennai reports 3.2 cases/100,000 children, Karnataka records 17.93 cases/100,000 children and Karnal in Haryana follows the middle path with 10.2 cases/100,000 children.[3–5]

Diabetes in children cannot be controlled without their active involvement. This is possible only if children across India are educated and informed about diabetes. An analysis to assess the diabetes awareness among school going children, of the science curriculum, using diabetes/juvenile diabetes/pancreas/insulin/endocrine system as keywords was performed.

The Books of National Council of Educational Research and Training/Central Board of Secondary Education (NCERT/CBSE) curricula from class 6 till class 10 were analyzed.[6–10] Total pages devoted to the biological sciences from class 6 to class 10 were 316. The aforementioned keywords appeared just five times. There are hardly 10 lines in the 5-year curriculum, with only a superficial mention of diabetes and insulin. The terms “type 1 diabetes” and “type 2 diabetes” are not mentioned at all. For ease of statistical evaluation, even if all these lines are combined, they hardly constitute half a page. Thus, diabetes gets nearly 0.0015% weightage of the total biology syllabus.

This small yet significant research shows the amount of insensitivity of our syllabus or curriculum designers toward the epidemic of diabetes. It is imperative to make the children aware of this disease that is affecting millions of them.

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