



Wave of Diabetes Takes Off: Obesity Leads to Dramatic Increase in Disease Numbers

- **By 2025 the number of diabetics will increase by another 150 million**
- **Change in lifestyle could bring a reduction of 60 percent**
- **New medications for loss of beta cell function**

European Health Forum Gastein 2007. The increase in the number of patients with diabetes could exceed even the worst fears. According to estimates by the International Diabetes Federation there are currently about 250 million diabetics worldwide and an increase of 150 million to nearly 400 million is predicted by the year 2025. For this reason the question of how medicine and healthcare systems can effectively respond to this problem was one of the central themes at the 10th European Health Forum Gastein taking place from 3 to 6 October 2007 in Bad Hofgastein.

The most important message from the experts: critical for success in the battle against the disease of the affluent is whether the behaviour of those at risk and those afflicted is successfully changed. Adipositas (obesity) is one of the main causes of Type 2 Diabetes. Approximately 60 percent of occurrences of the disease could be prevented with a change in lifestyle, as several studies impressively show. In an EU-wide project (DE-PLAN, Diabetes in Europe – Prevention Using Lifestyle, Physical Activity and Nutritional Intervention) directed by Jaakko Tuomilehto of Finland, researchers are currently testing to what extent the theoretical potentials for improvement can be put into practice. The efforts are focused on persons who exhibit a major risk for diabetes from the start, that is, people with a restricted tolerance for glucose.

There are new, promising developments in the area of diabetes medications as well. Substances particularly able to slow or stop the loss of beta cell functions typical of diabetes appear to be promising. The relevant medications have been available for a short time. Experimental data already indicates that as a result of these medications the survival of beta cells can be significantly improved. A favourable side effect of these medications is also the lack of weight gain. The prognosis for Type 2 Diabetes can therefore be significantly improved.

Bernhard Paulweber, expert on metabolic processes at the Salzburg Landeskliniken (SALK), emphasizes the significance of the fight against diabetes. The increasing number of people with the illness will lead to an enormous financial strain. “There is an urgent need for our healthcare systems to act. Intensive preventive measures have to be introduced immediately and treatment strategies made medically and financially more efficient so costs remain manageable to some degree.”

Further information:

EHFG Press Office, Mag. Thomas Brey, info@mbdialog.at, Tel.: +43 (0) 64 32/20262, mobile: +43 (0) 676/542 39 09