

DIABETES IN EUROPE

Diabetes is Europe's silent health pandemic. Its relentless impact on people living with diabetes gets worse overtime and there is no cure.

If PwD represented a European country, its population would be equivalent to that of Italy. That is 60 million citizens, all living with diabetes. Every single one of these cases is one too many – but it is only set to rise, and will reach up to 66 million people by 2030.

This means it

would become the third largest country by population in the EU – almost as large as the United Kingdom today.

Despite its increasing prevalence and worsening outcomes as the disease progresses, the seriousness and severity of diabetes has been underestimated in Europe. Each year, at least 114,000 people die from diabetes-related complications, five times more than in road accidents across Europe (25,000).^{3,4} Worldwide, someone dies from diabetes-related complications every eight seconds.

For people with diabetes, self-managing the disease is a fulltime responsibility and life-changing commitment, yet PwD

are usually only able to see a healthcare professional for a few minutes, up to four times a year. For the rest of the time

PwD are all on their own. Self-management is a round-the-clock job, with no breaks, no holidays and no time off.

Diabetes is misperceived as a disease linked to lifestyle choices. Like many other conditions, factors such as

diet, physical activity and smoking do play a role in risk and outcomes of diabetes, but there are underlying clinical causes of diabetes which are exacerbated by environmental factors.

People can develop the disease due to inherited biological traits, and its progression can be impacted by socio-economic status, availability of healthy food and safe outdoor space.

While PwD work hard every day to reduce risk to their health, they must be further supported by healthcare systems. Healthcare systems require new approaches to improve the outcomes for people living with diabetes, ensuring they can live life as healthily as possible.

The first step is to recognise the seriousness of the disease not just in terms of its prevalence across Europe – but its impact on individuals day-to-day, long-term, and on overall quality of life. Prevention, early diagnosis, and improvements in how the disease is managed make a significant difference to PwD.