

Population: 46.3 million (2016)

Percentage of older people: 15% over the age of 65 years old, which is expected to rise to 20% by 2050

Diabetes: 1.7m people living with the condition with an estimated 592,600 undiagnosed cases

The DR Barometer, a ground-breaking global study, has highlighted the urgent need to prevent unnecessary vision loss caused by diabetic retinopathy. To help facilitate regional and country-level actions on this issue, the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) hosted the Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) Barometer Latin American Advocacy Workshop on 6-7 April, 2018 in Mexico City, Mexico in partnership with the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) and Bayer.

The workshop brought together 46 delegates from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Mexico across many disciplines (patients, ophthalmologists, diabetes specialists, primary care providers, diabetes educators, governments, and industry) to work together to determine solutions for improving care pathways that lead to improved vision health outcomes for adult with diabetes in the region.

This “Viewpoint” outlines the country-specific strategies developed by the Argentine working group to improve patient outcomes at a local level.

Overall goal:

To improve and maintain the vision health of people with diabetes.

Barriers that need to be addressed:

1. Lack of epidemiological information on which to base public health actions
2. Lack of implementation of diagnosis and treatment guidelines
3. Inadequate education of patients and health workers (primary care physicians, ophthalmologists, nurses and nutritionists)
4. Unequal and inconsistent accessibility among socioeconomic groups and regions of Argentina
5. Late diagnosis of diabetes and its complications
6. Lack of prioritization of diabetic retinopathy (DR) and diabetic macular edema (DME) by health decision-makers

Key stakeholders of the working group:

Collaboration through a common strategic direction of all Argentine interdisciplinary stakeholders (patients, ophthalmologists, diabetes specialists, primary care providers, diabetes educators, governments, and industry) is essential to address barriers toward effective management of DR. These include:

- Diabetes patients and patient organizations: Federación Argentina de Diabetes
- Primary health care providers
- Diabetologists
- Vision health specialists: Sociedad Argentina de Retina y Vítreo (SARyV) and Sociedad Argentina de Oftalmología (SAO)
- Argentina Ministry of Health: the Superintendent, El Consejo Federal de Salud (COFESA), Programa de Atención Médica Integral (PAMI)

The objectives and future actions of the working group:

The DR Barometer Argentine working group developed specific, measurable and timely objectives to begin closing the gap and shifting the needle to improve outcomes for patients at risk of vision loss due to diabetes related eye conditions namely:

1. Increase ophthalmologists' adherence to existing medical guidelines and protocols

Action: Increase awareness of existing medical guidelines among members of the SAO and SARyV by developing and conducting a survey as well as disseminating information via mail and medical congresses (including clinical practice guidelines and algorithms for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up).

Target: 70% of ophthalmologists in Argentina are aware of the guidelines for treatment of diabetic retinopathy.

2. Increase number of eye examinations conducted to detect diabetic retinopathy in at-risk patients by referring to an ophthalmologist

Action: Increase awareness of the importance of referring diabetes patients for vision screening by conducting outreach and awareness activities among patients, primary care providers and diabetologists.

Target: Increase the number of people with diabetes being screened for DR by 50%.

The next steps:

1. Engage with key stakeholder groups on proposed actions and assess potential project cost, time commitment, and scope (Dr. Maximiliano Smietniansky, Geriatric Specialist)
2. Breakdown of tasks and roles within the working group (Dra. Florencia Aranguren, Diabetologist)
3. Development of indicators to measure progress of the working group (Sr. Jorge Elgart, Economist)

Resources

The working group is made up of experts with different knowledge and expertise. The group operates with efficient group dynamics and understanding of the collaborative work needed.

Human and financial capital as well as technical resources such as web applications are needed to advance the working group's ongoing initiatives.

To learn more or join the DR Barometer Argentine Working Group, contact:

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