

Consensus Statement

Concurrent with population ageing, diabetes has reached epidemic proportions in Latin America, and is fast becoming one of the leading causes of death and disability. As a chronic, progressive, and systemic disease, diabetes with its serious and life changing burden of disease will increase substantially over the next two decades.

The loss of vision is one of the most feared health problems and yet the prevalence of vision threatening diabetic eye diseases including diabetic retinopathy (DR) and diabetic macular edema (DME) is increasing in this region at a rapid rate.

Converging risk factors are leading to 'the perfect storm' with the potential to impact the social and economic fabric of family and community: poorly managed diabetes and duration of the disease condition combined with systemic barriers such as inadequate and unequal access to screening, cost of treatment and limited use of professional guidelines and protocols.

The gold standard for patient care involves an integrated and coherent patient care pathway that takes a life course approach and involves ophthalmologists, diabetes specialists, primary care providers and diabetes educators functioning as one team. Together with industry and government, each has an independent and contributing role and responsibility.

On 6-7 April 2018, the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) hosted the DR Barometer Latin American Advocacy Workshop in Mexico City, Mexico in partnership with the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) and Bayer.

This multidisciplinary workshop brought together 46 delegates from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Mexico to identify barriers and create solutions for improving care pathways that lead to improved vision health outcomes for people with diabetes in the region. Key opinion leaders and experts from across disciplines at the workshop came to a consensus that:

1. Existing initiatives for screening and treatment of DR must be improved through an integrated preventative and treatment approach that includes primary and specialist health care providers.
2. Targeted education programs which promote the maintenance of functional ability throughout the life course, including vision, within diabetes management is vital for patient and the front-line health care professional, "the primary health care provider".
3. Collaboration through a common strategic direction among stakeholders (patients, ophthalmologists, diabetes specialists, primary care providers, diabetes educators, governments, and industry) is crucial to address barriers toward effective management of DR.
4. Strengthening the exchange and mobilisation of knowledge within and across countries and the region, through the DR Barometer Communities of Practice: drbarometer.com/communities-of-practice

Through mutual enthusiasm and shared decision-making, delegates have joined together to develop and implement country-level strategies to improve the outcomes of adults with diabetes with an eye on their vision health and functional ability throughout life.