



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemarkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

26 April 2022

People with diabetes and cognitive impairment at high risk of heart disease

A new international study co-authored by a University of Cape Town (UCT) endocrinologist found that people with diabetes and cognitive impairment are at high risk of heart disease. The findings are published in [*The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*](#).

Cognitive impairment is when a person has trouble with memory or paying attention, remembering, learning new things, recognising people or places, concentrating and making decisions that affect their everyday life.

Associate Professor Peter Raubenheimer, Head of the Division of General Internal Medicine at Groote Schuur Hospital and UCT said: "We found that, in people living with diabetes and other heart risk factors such as previous heart attacks, high blood pressure or cholesterol, those with the lowest level of cognitive function had a higher risk of heart attack and stroke than those with higher levels of cognitive function."

People with severe cognitive impairment were up to 1.6 times more likely to experience major adverse cardiovascular events, and 1.8 times more likely to experience a stroke or die compared to people without cognitive impairment.

According to Raubenheimer, 1 in 10 South Africans over the age of 40 may be living with cognitive impairment, with age being the greatest risk factor.

In this study, the team assessed cognitive function in over 8000 people with diabetes from 24 countries, and then over the next almost 6 years followed patients to see if they had heart attacks, strokes or had died, and if there was an association between their cognitive function at the start and these outcomes.

"The findings suggests that we can predict a person with diabetes' risk of future heart attack or stroke using simple cognitive tests," said Raubenheimer. "This screening should be included in the regular review of people living with diabetes."

Raubenheimer said proven heart medications should be offered to patients with diabetes and cognitive impairment to reduce their future risk of a heart attack or stroke.

The study received funding from Eli-Lilly and Company.

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Ridovhona Mbulaheni

Media Liaison Assistant
Communication and Marketing Department
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch
Tel: (021) 650 2333
Cell: (064) 905 3807
Email: ridovhona.mbulaheni@uct.ac.za
Website: www.uct.ac.za