

Nationwide look at diabetes in Mexico paints grim picture

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If diabetes in Mexico continues unchecked, at least one in three people, and as many as one in two, could be diagnosed with the disease in their lifetimes.

In the first comprehensive effort to document incidence of the disease in Mexico, research led by Rafael Meza, assistant professor of epidemiology at the U-M School of Public Health, found that from 1960 to 2012 [diabetes](#) incidence in the country doubled every 10 years. The researchers predict that up to 23 percent of the country's population could have the disease by 2050.

"The work highlights the magnitude of the problem and how much bigger it could get if nothing is done," Meza said. "Diabetes rates have been increasing dramatically largely due to the obesity epidemic in Mexico. Comprehensive diabetes/obesity prevention strategies are thus critical to reverse the trends."

The study could also help those combating the diabetes in the U.S., he added.

"Hispanics have very high incidence rate, and a large percentage of them are from Mexican descent," Meza said. "We know people from Mexico have high susceptibility rates, so some of those things that we're learning could be eventually be applied to understanding what's happening with diabetes among the Hispanic population in the U.S."

The research is reported in the current issue of *Preventive Medicine*.

Using data from the Mexico National Health and Nutrition Survey, Meza and colleagues from the Mexico National Institute of Public Health projected how the disease will progress from 2015 to 2050.

"The large projected numbers of diabetes cases are in fact largely driven by the expected aging of the population that will occur in the next 30 years," Meza said. "So countries like Mexico need to prepare for this increasing burden of disease."

Diabetes is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality in the world, estimated by the International Diabetes Federation to affect 387 million people. As incidence continues to rise, it is expected to be the 7th-leading cause of death in the world by 2030.

The researchers confirmed previous studies that showed newer generations are at higher risk, due to poor diet and lack of exercise. Mexico currently has one of the highest obesity and overweight rates in the world, estimated at 71 percent of the population.

"This is important since as new prevention policies are implemented, like a national obesity and diabetes prevention strategy or the recent taxes on sugary drinks, it will be important to measure the effects of such interventions relative to a no-intervention scenario," said study co-author Dr. Tonatiuh Barrientos-

Gutierrez of the Mexico National Institute of Public Health and a former scientist at the U-M School of Public Health.

Previous research on the health effects of sugary drinks by Meza and Barrientos-Gutierrez helped inform Mexico's 2014 tax policy changes. They will study the success of the sugary drink tax on reducing obesity

and diabetes rates, using as a baseline the models and data generated in this study.

More information: Rafael Meza et al. Burden of type 2 diabetes in Mexico: past, current and future prevalence and incidence rates, *Preventive Medicine* (2015). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ypmed.2015.10.015](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2015.10.015)

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