



New Diabetes Pharmacist Network-developed learning module for pharmacists about the need for preconception care in women with diabetes

Women with diabetes and their unborn children have a greater likelihood of developing complications during pregnancy, compared with the general population.

(Tuesday, March 28, 2017 – TORONTO) - Today, a new online interactive learning module launched that will help educate over a thousand pharmacists from across Canada on the recommendations for preconception care for women with diabetes. The project is the result of an on-going collaboration between the Diabetes Pharmacists Network based at the University of Toronto's Banting & Best Diabetes Centre and Diabetes Action Canada.

"Pregnant women with diabetes and their unborn children have significantly higher rates of complications – compared to women in the general population," said Dr. Lori MacCallum, Sun Life Financial Professor in Wellness and Diabetes Education and Assistant Professor, Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Toronto. "Women with diabetes see a pharmacist more often than any other health care provider. By educating pharmacists on the importance of preconception care, they will be able to play a significant role in reaching women with diabetes of childbearing age and providing education."

Women with diabetes who become pregnant are at greater risk of many potential complications, which include: malformations in the baby, preterm delivery, large for gestational age infants, caesarean delivery as well as worsening diabetes complications in the mother, such as high blood pressure and eye disease. The good news is that studies have shown that preconception care, ideally delivered in the planning stages for pregnancy, before one becomes pregnant - can significantly reduce risks, almost to the level of women without diabetes.

Unfortunately, less than 50% of women receive such care and vulnerable populations including women with a lower socioeconomic status, lower health literacy, and those with a poor relationship with their health care provider are less likely to receive such care. All women with diabetes of childbearing potential need to be aware of the need for preconception care regardless of where they are in their reproductive journey. It is vital to implement these measures prior to women becoming pregnant.

This is where pharmacists, particularly community pharmacists, can play a greater role in addressing this care gap.

The new module will educate pharmacists about the importance of preconception care, particularly in women with diabetes, and the recommendations for blood sugar control, safety of medications, folate supplementation and screening for diabetes complications. It features tools that allow pharmacists to self-assess their current knowledge, watch an expert video, apply their learning to a patient case, and discuss the topic with their peers.

"Our goal is to empower and support pharmacists in taking a greater role in the delivery of preconception care," said Dr. MacCallum.

For more information about this initiative, please visit diabetespharmacistsnetwork.ca or contact Rose Alquiza at rose.alquiza@uhn.ca or at (416) 340-4800 ext. 7136.