DIABETES AND THE PROSPECT OF A NATIONAL AND GLOBAL DISASTER

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Diabetes, obesity with their cardiovascular consequences are now a worldwide epidemic with medical, social and economic devastating and unprecedented. These diseases are no longer limited to “rich countries”, and now a growing public health problem in developing countries; where the "Western" dietary pattern spreads and often replaces the traditional and healthy food. To this must be added the profound changes associated with rapid urbanization, changes in social, family and technological advances and comfort. The role of the food industry is highly present in a consumer society living under the influence and pressure of advertising.

It is amazing also found that 80% of people with diabetes live in low- and middle-income and socially disadvantaged people are in a country that are most vulnerable to this disease. These fast lifestyle transitions result in unprecedented increase in the rate of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and diabetes in the developing countries.

According to figures from the International Diabetes Federation, the number of people with diabetes now exceeds 382 million and will reach 595 million in less than 25 years.

On the other hand, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that by 2030, total mortality due to NCDs will increase to about 52 million people a year, nearly five times more than communicable diseases.

Between 1960 and today, barely two generations, the Moroccan food, Maghreb countries and the MENA region has been completely transformed. This phenomenon can be explained by the profound social and economic changes that led to an upheaval in lifestyle during this same period. Indeed, the transition to an abundant supply towards refined foods and sweet, of animal foods and fats plays a major role in the current epidemic of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease, among other non-communicable diseases. In Morocco, diabetes is steadily increasing and it is estimated the number of diabetics to more than 1.8 million. Similarly, the number of overweight or obese is increasing, and well beyond the 3 million Moroccans.

If nothing is done, these new scourges with complications threaten to absorb the benefits of economic progress worldwide. When it comes to disability, alternative health care costs and other factors could triple the already high numbers of WHO. Government budgets across the planet will face immense pressure from the care of people with diabetes, resulting in the payment of disability pensions, compensation, medical and social services costs, and income. In addition, private health insurance and employers will face the rising costs of treating more and more people with diabetes.

In his working paper on the social determinants of NCDs, published in 2013, the United Nations Development Programme has focused for the first time not only recognized noncommunicable diseases, including diabetes, as one of the most pressing health problems in the world, but also as a challenge for development and economic growth.
Faced with this dramatic picture, can we hope to reverse the situation and fight effectively against the new national and global epidemic?

Yes, according to the International Diabetes Federation and WHO, a healthy lifestyle is the cornerstone of this strategy. Indeed, changes in lifestyle, such as healthy eating and physical activity are effective in delaying and, in many cases, prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes and reduce the risk of complications for patients already. It is estimated that by monitoring the weight of adults, could be reduced by at least 50% the number of diabetes cases.

In addition to 80% of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes and over a third of cancers could be prevented by eliminating shared risk factors, mainly tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol.

Health promotion and primary prevention are our most effective weapons in the fight against diabetes and other chronic non-communicable diseases. These efforts have not only the potential to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes, but also to have a beneficial effect on the risk of other common NCDs such as obesity, high blood pressure, cancer, cerebral vascular accidents and heart disease.

To achieve this goal in our country, changes in individual and collective behavior have to be made quickly! The whole society must be involved and feel concerned. The first health professionals but also policy makers and the private sector must make an effort to reduce the overall risk rate in the population. To do this, the promotion and implementation of environmental measures (in the areas of health, transport, agriculture, finance, etc.) that encourage a healthy lifestyle from childhood are indispensable. All this must be done in close liaison with the ongoing actions and seek to develop an integrated model that takes into account the Moroccan authenticity but also challenges and risks of globalization.

Let us work together to fight against this epidemic that truly represents with the other NCDs the challenge of the 21st century.