

Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes: Critical Issues

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We are encountering an increasing burden of chronic diseases, as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases (CVD). More than ½ of the patients with type 2 diabetes (T2DM) dies of CVD, and the mortality for patients with T2DM and CVD are as bad as for patients with prior MI and no diabetes. The other way round 30% of patients with CVD has T2DM and a further 30% has either T2DM or IGT if investigated properly, using an OGTT. The prognosis for these patients with newly diagnosed T2DM or IGT, is also more severe than for patients with normal glucose metabolism.

As preventive treatment is warranted, it is critical to have guidelines for and to find the diabetic patients among patients with CVD (using OGTT) and identifying the T2DM patients with coronary heart disease or heart failure, using decision algorithms.

Another critical step is the optimization of the treatment for the CVD and for the risk factors, using a multifactorial approach. Life style changes, including smoking cessation, must be supported; and drug treatment initiated and optimized, using antithrombotic, antihypertensive, anti diabetic and lipid lowering drugs.

Targeting the dyslipidemia of diabetes is difficult, as no drug group is efficient in this. But treating the LDL-cholesterol with statins are fairly easy, and is even reducing the triglycerides and increasing the HDL. A major problem is the vast knowledge on "the lower the better" regarding the LDL, setting new goals in recent guidelines of an LDL < 1.8-2.0 mmol/l (70-77 mg/dL) in patients with T2DM + CVD; and indication for statin treatment in patients with T2DM without CVD if T-chol > 3,5 (135 mg/dL), reducing the LDL with 30-40%. A recent survey in General Practice, EUROASPIRE III, investigated if the goals were reached in patients without CVD, in a variety of European countries. Regarding blood pressure only approximately 30% reached their target, while only 20% were below the target level of total cholesterol < 4.5 mmol/l and LDL < 2.5 mmol/l.

In conclusion:

- CVD is common in T2DM and It is important to diagnose CVD, as it has implications for treatment
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- We have good treatment options ! - And we have guidelines !
- But we do not follow the Guidelines – the big challenge being how do this.