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Community utilisation of the Diabetes Support Program at Wan Smolbag Theatre, Shefa Province 2019-2021

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Abstract

Background: The Wan Smolbag (WSB) Diabetes Support Program was established in 2018 out of a local need to provide an integrated and holistic approach to diabetes care for WSB staff. Working with healthcare workers, WSB nutrition staff developed a program to support behavioural change through nutrition and physical activity counselling. The aim of this study was to conduct a descriptive analysis of the Program participants and its utilisation.

Methods: Records were kept for each patient visit. Individual files were then collated into a single database for data familiarization and preliminary analysis. A descriptive statistical analysis was then performed of participants diagnoses, demographic information and disease status. Ethical review was not obtained as this was a routine programmatic data analysis of de-identified data.

Results: Between 2019 and 2021, 127 participants accessed the program (690 total visits). Demographic and visit data were missing in each patient file. Analysis was conducted on available data for each variable. Two thirds of referrals to the program were for high blood sugar, others were referred for high blood pressure, weight management or preventive health support. The average attendance to the program was 5.5 visits (range = 1-52). The program facilitated 33 unique referrals to the NCD Unit and private medical clinics for follow-up including medication, foot care and eye checks.

Discussion: Although the sample size for the study is relatively small, our findings provide valuable insight into the profile of patient who may access such a program alongside their usual care. A typical person attending the program is likely to be overweight or obese, have higher than normal blood sugar and is unlikely to be taking medication. Diabetes care in Vanuatu is complex and there is a need for locally-led care with an interdisciplinary approach.