ANSARI: Costs of diabetic care are skyrocketing

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The cost of Diabetes Mellitus care continues to rise. Patients are having difficulty affording the medications due to the high cost of new oral diabetic medications and insulins.It is causing a serious financial burden and cause of concern for the whole family. The cost of treating diabetics in the U.S. has gone up to $327 billion annually, which includes a rise of 26% in the last 5 years.

According to the National Diabetes Statistics report of 2017, there are 30.3 million Americans, or 9.4%, of the U.S. population is suffering from diabetes. Another 84.1 million have prediabetes (Hemoglobin A1c from 5.8 to 6.4) who may become full diabetic within 5 years if not treated. About 1.5 million people are added to this total every year.

Diabetes is well known to cause heart disease, kidney failure, stroke, blindness and amputation of the lower extremities. The treatment of Type 2 diabetes starts with metformin, which is the first line medication for diabetes. Metformin is cheap and affordable. There are some patients who cannot tolerate metformin due to persistent diarrhea, nausea or vomiting.

After metformin, the cost of diabetes becomes an expensive phenomenon. Cost of diabetic care has skyrocketed in the last several years. There are many types of insulin with different prices depending on the insurance preferences. The cost of insulin has increased from $100-$200 per month to $400-$500 per month, depending on the brand name.

There are several new classes of medications that are being promoted due to their beneficial effects on renal function, cardiovascular mortality and weight loss. Unfortunately, the cost of these medications is extremely high. Just the co-pay can be several hundred dollars per month. What happens if a patient requires both short- and long-acting insulin as well as expensive oral medications? If they are not covered by their prescription drug plan then it can simply become unaffordable.

The prohibitive cost of diabetic treatment is something that most of us have to deal with. Unfortunately, there is no easy solution. Some medications sold in Canada, Mexico and other countries are much cheaper and affordable. We need to create more political awareness about the plight of the people who are suffering and have to choose between food and medication. With the incidence of diabetes rising at an epidemic proportion, this challenge will only get worse.

There is some cheaper version of long- and short-acting insulin (Novolin N and R) available at certain pharmacies. Patients can also go to [goodRX.com](http://goodrx.com/) to compare prices from different pharmacies before purchasing medications.

Let’s work together to find a way to make the cost of diabetes care more affordable.

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