

World Health Organization

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STATEMENT

UPDATE ON WHO RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA FOR DIABETES MELLITUS

WHO has been instrumental in developing guidelines for the diagnosis and classification of diabetes since 1965. The last review of diagnostic criteria and classification occurred in 1999, and the diagnostic criteria were further updated in 2006.

Since the last WHO guidelines were developed, a number of new studies relevant to the diagnosis and classification of diabetes have been published. An expert consultation, including representation from the International Diabetes Federation, was convened by WHO in March 2009 to review the available evidence on which to base any potential changes of the existing recommendations and to discuss the implications of these changes in all WHO Member States.

Several national and international professional diabetes organizations have issued or are planning to issue updated recommendations. For example, the American Diabetes Association (ADA) has published new recommendations for the diagnosis of diabetes and risk categories for diabetes using glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) in a Position Statement in the January edition of *Diabetes Care*. However, national agency guidelines usually have a much more specific and local focus than a WHO document. The body of new data and the fact that national guidelines are not always applicable globally, have prompted health care workers and policy makers from many countries to seek guidance from WHO.

"The WHO is currently considering its recommendations" commented Dr Ala Alwan, Assistant Director-General for Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health at WHO, "The process involves a careful review of the evidence, but must also take into account a number of issues that have global relevance, particularly for developing nations, including cost, availability, population characteristics such as the prevalence of anaemias, hemoglobinopathies etc, and the critical issue of standardization".

"The place of HbA1c measurement as a diagnostic and screening test for diabetes is one of the key questions discussed by the WHO expert group last year," commented Professor Paul Zimmet who co-chaired the expert group with Professor Sir George Alberti. "Evidence is currently under review at WHO using the recently adopted GRADE system of evaluating the evidence, and recommendations appropriate for a global audience will be formulated and published in the spring".