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# Qatar: Diabetes

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# State of Qatar

PUBLIC HEALTH BRIEF (PUBH100)

DIANGELO GONZALEZ

## About the Nation:

Information from the Central Intelligence Agency



Image: Central Intelligence Agency, 2018

Location: Qatar is located on a peninsula in the Middle East which borders the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia.

Population: 2,314,307

Ethnic Groups: Non-Qatari (88.4%), Qatari (11.6%)

Religious Groups: 67.7% Muslim, 13.8% Christian, 13.8% Hindu, 3.1% Buddhist, 15.4% other.

Political Structure: The State of Qatar is a constitutional monarchy, led by Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. This government allows for hereditary rule and disallows for the citizens to vote for a change in their government. The Legislative Branch consists of an Advisory Council with 35 members. The Judicial Branch has Supreme Court which consists of 9 members. The Executive Branch is led by the Amir, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. The Amir appoints all positions in both the Legislative and Judicial branches. Furthermore, political parties are banned

Major Challenges Faced by Qatar: The state of Qatar, although extremely wealthy due to their booming oil and natural gas industry, has many problems.

Currently, the nation is rated by the Central Intelligence

Agency (CIA) as being on the Tier 2 Watch List. Qatar does not meet the minimum standards to eradicate human trafficking. Furthermore, since the majority of the country's citizens are people from other countries, there are many migrants willing to work for very low wages that often result in poor working conditions, debt, abuse, etc. Moreover, Qatar has seen at least three cases of Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome outbreaks since 2016. The most prominent issue, however, is diabetes.

## About the public health problem:

- Type II Diabetes is a disease in which the body is unable to regulate its blood glucose levels. This inability is caused by the lack of insulin production in the body (American Diabetes Association).
- A study that looked into prevention and causes for Type II Diabetes in Qatar found that demographic and lifestyle factors are the main cause for the disease in Qatar (Bener A. & Al-Hamaq). Furthermore, another study found that younger age groups, especially children, were more likely to have this disease than their older counterparts (Christos P.J. et al).
  - Those that engage in poor lifestyles such as poor nutrition and a lack of exercise are at greater risk for diabetes (Kurtulus et al).
- It is said that 16% of the Qatari population is affected by diabetes and is likely to double by 2030 (Gulf Times).

- Increased hunger, excessive thirst, frequent urination, tingling sensations in both the hands and feet, and dry mouth are all symptoms that lead to the diagnosis of diabetes.
  - Once diagnosed, insulin shots and healthcare available through the Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) can help treat diabetes.
- Left untreated, diabetes can lead to kidney damage, arteriosclerosis (a hardening of blood vessels), vision loss, and heart disease.
- Although lifestyle choices play a large role in determining whether one contracts Type II diabetes, those who are in a family with a history of diabetes are also at risk. In other words, diabetes has been linked to genetics (Muftah et al).
- The Qatar Disease Association (QDA) has attempted to spread awareness regarding type II diabetes in Qatar. Efforts to reduce the numbers of people with the disease include:
  - Al-Bawasil International Camp
  - Prevention Camps
  - Diabetes Mobile Clinic
- A growing fast-food presence in Qatar makes it increasingly hard to battle diabetes. Furthermore, those who are not citizens of Qatar cannot access its healthcare services.



Image: Qatar Diabetes Association, 2018

#### **What can be done to help lower the rates for diabetes in Qatar?**

- Diabetes is undoubtedly not a problem unique to Qatar, but rather a problem seen in many nations across the globe.
- To address the problem in Qatar, parents should start with limiting their child's access to fast food restaurants. An advocacy for a healthier diet nationwide would also prove to be helpful. In fact, Qatar could have days in the week that are dedicated to meals that are low in cholesterol, salt, etc.

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