Abstract

OBJECTIVE: To determine the population-based prevalence of diabetes and other categories of glucose intolerance (impaired glucose tolerance [IGT] and impaired fasting glucose [IFG]) in Australia and to compare the prevalence with previous Australian data.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS: A national sample involving 11,247 participants aged > or =25 years living in 42 randomly selected areas from the six states and the Northern Territory were examined in a cross-sectional survey using the 75-g oral glucose tolerance test to assess fasting and 2-h plasma glucose concentrations. The World Health Organization diagnostic criteria were used to determine the prevalence of abnormal glucose tolerance.

RESULTS: The prevalence of diabetes in Australia was 8.0% in men and 6.8% in women, and an additional 17.4% of men and 15.4% of women had IGT or IFG. Even in the youngest age group (25-34 years), 5.7% of subjects had abnormal glucose tolerance. The overall diabetes prevalence in Australia was 7.4%, and an additional 16.4% had IGT or IFG. Diabetes prevalence has more than doubled since 1981, and this is only partially explained by changes in age profile and obesity.

CONCLUSIONS: Australia has a rapidly rising prevalence of diabetes and other categories of abnormal glucose tolerance. The prevalence of abnormal glucose tolerance in Australia is one of the highest yet reported from a developed nation with a predominantly Europid background.