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Diabetes mellitus in Puerto Rican patients 50 years and older: Uncontrolled glucose levels during the holidays

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Diabetes mellitus has become a health care concern in Puerto Rico. Lifestyle modification, proper diet and appropriate pharmacotherapy are necessary to improve blood glucose levels, which are measured by testing HbA1C every three months. (a form of haemoglobin that is measured to identify the three-month average plasma glucose concentration). The holiday season in Puerto Rico particularly has been known as a weight gaining period; this due to increased intake of foods rich in carbohydrates and fats. Considering these factors, this study is aimed to determine differences in glucose levels of diabetic patients in the holiday season versus prior months. We conducted a cross sectional study to estimate the variation of glycaemic control and its relation to holiday times. Participants were diabetes mellitus patients 50 years or older recruited from six laboratories in San Juan. Patients who qualified and agreed to participate were given a written consent form and data such

as age, gender, and HbA1C levels. Data of 651 patients was collected and included in the study. Glycaemic changes were examined in the preholiday and holiday periods. A one-way ANOVA was used to evaluate differences in HbA1C mean scores between the different months. Other statistical tests were used to compare mean scores of female vs male and differences in age groups. The mean values of HbA1c levels were significantly higher in February and March compared with October and November. Significant gender and age differences were also seen when comparing glucose levels. Patient's glucose levels increased after the holiday period suggesting poor glycaemic control during that period. Considering this, doctors should be aware of lifestyle changes and more emphatic in recommending proper dieting during the holiday season.

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