Diabetes Raises the Risk of Disability Among Seniors

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Older people living with diabetes have a greater than 50 percent increased risk of developing a physical disability that hampers their ability to conduct daily activities, MedPage Today reports. This news is of great relevance to people with HIV, not only because they have elevated rates of diabetes, but because the HIV population at large is aging. Diabetes itself raises the risk of disorders such as cardiovascular disease, retinopathy (damage to the retina) and kidney failure, all of which can have disabling effects.

Publishing their findings in The Lancet Diabetes Endocrinology, researchers conducted a systematic review of 26 studies of adults both with and without diabetes. Follow-up periods in the studies ranged from 18 months to nine years, and their participant groups ranged in number from 369 to 66,813. Most of the participants were older than 55.

The investigators found that, among a study population with a mean age of 55, diabetes was associated with a 51 percent relative risk increase for a disability affecting mobility.

Diabetes was also linked to an 82 percent elevated risk of disability that impeded such daily activities as bathing, as well as a 65 percent raised likelihood of a disability interfering with the capacity to conduct instrumental activities of everyday life, such as using a telephone.

To read the MedPage Today story, click here.

To read the Lancet abstract, click here.

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