Exploring the many faces of diabetes mellitus

It is nearly impossible to open a newspaper or magazine without seeing some reference about diabetes. The diabetes epidemic has reached a level of public awareness that is unprecedented. Further, an increasing number of journal articles have explored the relationship of diabetes with other illnesses such as obesity, sleep apnea and Vitamin D deficiency. The great majority of recent press has been focused on adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM). However, diabetes is a collection of glucose disorders and proper evaluation and treatment necessitates this recognition. In this issue of the AOA Health Watch series “DOs against diabetes” we explore some unique subgroups of people with diabetes.

First, David J. Valent, DO, and Andrew W. Wapner, DO, discuss how the emerging problem of T2DM in children is currently identified and treated. This is an emerging problem that has huge public health implications. It was once assumed that children with diabetes had type 1 diabetes mellitus (T1DM) but this assumption is no longer true and this article explores the available evidence to screen for and treat T2DM in children and adolescents.

In the second article, Tracy L. Marx, DO, and Rachel M. Holt, OMS IV, discuss the unique circumstances of the older adult with diabetes. Further, they provide suggestions when the older adult with diabetes should be treated aggressively but also share when different treatment guidelines may be appropriate.

Also in this issue, Allison Petznick, DO, reviews the importance of early and aggressive strategies to prevent microvascular complications. She discusses how to address the patient who does not understand the need to take preventive medications when they do not feel bad. Finally, she gives the reader “Take Home” messages about how to help prevent diabetes complications, recognizing that glucose control is not always the most effective strategy.

Finally, in my article I explore a different kind of diabetes: Latent autoimmune diabetes of the adult or LADA. This is an increasingly recognized form of diabetes and may be present in 10% of people who think they have T2DM. The disease progression and treatment is substantially different and, therefore, increased recognition of this condition is important.