A sweet improvement in Diabetes testing for South Africa

Lancet Laboratories gets international certification for HbA1c testing methods

To coincide with Diabetes Month, Lancet Laboratories is proud to announce they are the first and only routine pathology laboratory in South Africa to be awarded best-practice certification for their Haemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) testing method by the National Glycohemoglobin Standardization Program (NGSP).1

This now means South African healthcare professionals have access to the most accurate HbA1c pathology method for monitoring blood glucose control and predicting long-term complications, enabling them to make more targeted treatment-management decisions for their diabetic patients.2

It is estimated over 400 000 South Africans are being managed with diabetes in the private sector alone.3 “With radical shifts in lifestyle and culture, South Africans are progressively becoming more affected by diabetes and its debilitating long-term complications including heart disease, blindness, amputation, kidney disease and erectile dysfunction,” said Dr David Rambau, Chemical Pathologist and Head of Lancet Laboratories Quality Assurance Division.

The HbA1c provides an average blood glucose value from the previous six to 12 weeks.2 While other routine laboratories throughout South Africa perform the HbA1c test, Lancet is the first and only routine pathology laboratory in South Africa to achieve NGSP certification.1 This indicates to healthcare professionals that the HbA1c test result produced by Lancet is the most reliable, accurate and traceable to the gold standard reference method used in the Diabetes Control and Complications Trial (DCCT)4 and United Kingdom Prospective Diabetes Study (UKPDS).5

“The findings from DCCT and UKPDS have significantly changed the way diabetes is managed today. NGSP certification of Lancet’s HbA1c testing method enables healthcare professionals to directly interpret their patient’s results using the findings from these landmark studies, supporting them to better manage their patient’s care,” said Dr David Rambau.

In addition to monitoring and screening blood glucose levels, this year, The American Diabetes Association (ADA) released a position statement endorsing HbA1c as a tool for diagnosing diabetes.4 Importantly, however, the ADA recommended that the HbA1c result used for establishing a diagnosis is performed by a NGSP certified laboratory.6

In South Africa, the Society for Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes of South Africa (SEMDSA) has called for all major laboratories to submit themselves for NGSP certification as a matter of urgency,7 however, due to the limited number of NGSP certified routine pathology laboratories in South Africa, both SEMDSA and the Centre for Diabetes and Endocrinology (CDE) have not yet recommended the HbA1c test as a diagnostic tool for diabetes.7

“While diabetes can be successfully controlled, patients who are not accurately monitored and managed are at a higher risk for developing serious long-term health complications. This in-turn places additional pressure on an already overburdened healthcare system. Lancet’s NGSP certification provides healthcare professionals with greater peace of mind knowing they have access to the most accurate information available to support their diabetes treatment-management decisions,” concludes Dr David Rambau.

REFERENCES
7. The Society for Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes of South Africa (SEMDSA). Position statement on the use of HbA1c assays for the diagnosis of diabetes mellitus. JEMDSA, 2010: Vol,15 No. 2

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