Questionnaires Rival Labs for Diabetes Screening

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TORONTO — Questionnaires are as accurate as laboratory tests in screening patients for type 2 diabetes, Dr. Kara A. Nerenberg and her associates reported in a poster at the annual joint meeting of the Canadian Diabetes Association and the Canadian Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism.

"Diabetes screening questionnaires are simple, cheap alternatives to lab tests as initial screening tests," said Dr. Nerenberg and her associates, of McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont.

A systematic review of data assessing the diagnostic performance of diabetes screening questionnaires yielded 10 studies of eight different questionnaires in 22 global populations with similar prevalences of type 2 diabetes. All of the questionnaires asked about age and obesity, while a majority also assessed hypertension, history of dysglycemia, activity/exercise, diet, family history, and sex.

Sensitivity of the questionnaires ranged from 0.67 (the Finnish DRS-Modified) to 0.82 (the Finnish DRS), and specificity from 0.58 (the Finnish DRS) to 0.74 (the Danish Risk Score). Both the Finnish and Danish scores performed consistently well in the different ethnic populations studied. Overall sensitivity of the questionnaires was 0.58, within the same range as the 0.40-0.60 with fasting plasma glucose and 0.69 for the oral glucose tolerance test.

The data were heterogeneous, however, with most of the variability accounted for by the prevalence of type 2 diabetes in the population being tested, they noted.

The screening questionnaire could be filled out in the waiting room, which would allow the physician to discuss the results with the patient at the same visit and refer those who score high for follow-up with an oral glucose tolerance test, Dr. Nerenberg said in an interview. ■