

INSULIN AT 100: ACCESS ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

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BACKGROUND

Diabetes is a major issue that is increasing at an alarming rate worldwide and with COVID-19 pandemic, access to care for diabetic patients has been severely impaired. About 19 million people in Africa have diabetes, and about a third of this population requires insulin. Studies show that less than half of this population have access to insulin which may lead to severe complications and eventual death.

AIM

The purpose of this research is to identify the reasons for the lack of access to insulin in Africa and propose sustainable solutions.

METHODS

- A general review of the literature was carried out by searching online sources such as Google Scholar and PubMed using relevant key-words; insulin, accessibility, availability, Africa. They were screened, evaluated, and checked by reviewers for appropriateness.

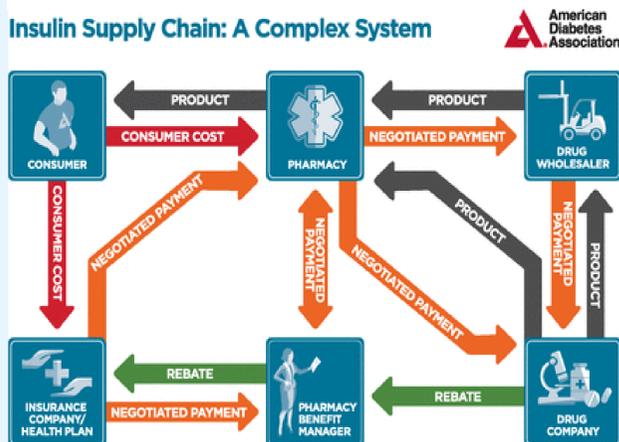


Figure 1. Chart showing the complex chain of Insulin supply from the manufacturer to the patients.

REFERENCES

W. T. Cefalu¹, D. E. Dawes², G. Gavlak³, D. Goldman⁴, W. H. Herman⁵, K. Van Nuys⁴, A. C. Powers⁶, S. I. Taylor⁷ and A. L. Yatvin⁸, on behalf of the Insulin Access and Affordability Working Group

RESULTS

The lack of access to insulin in Africa is multifactorial in nature. Lack of production plants being a factor has led to Africa's total reliance on the global trading system to obtain insulin through import. Also, the lopsidedness in developmental policies, where diabetes is often left out of the operational strategies of the main aid actors despite the increasing morbidity and mortality arising from the complications. There is a marked unbeneficial effect of the Oligopoly enjoyed by the three leading leaders of insulin production (Eli Lilly, Novo Nordisk, and Sanofi) on the African continent. Regulatory requirements for insulin need to be stringent enough to protect the health of people but not to hinder market entry. These 3 companies hold 95% of the market share and as such control the global supply and pricing of insulin. Local production of insulin in Africa is required and needs government and private sector collaboration to be sustainable.

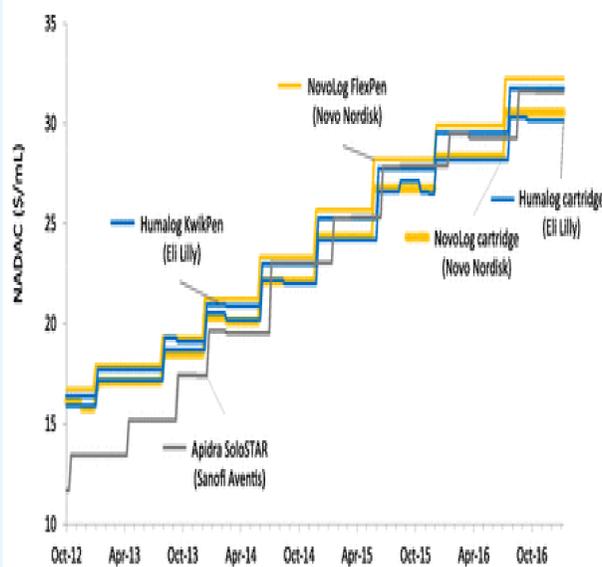


Figure 2: Companies' list prices for for five rapid-acting insulin pen or cartridge products, 2012–2016

MORE RESULTS

Evidence has shown the market dynamics that influence the patients' access to the life-saving medication. Procurement cost and oligopoly are the leading causes of the inability of over 19 million Africans to get an uninterrupted access to insulin therapy, thus leading to medication therapy failure, reduction in quality of life and eventually increased mortality.

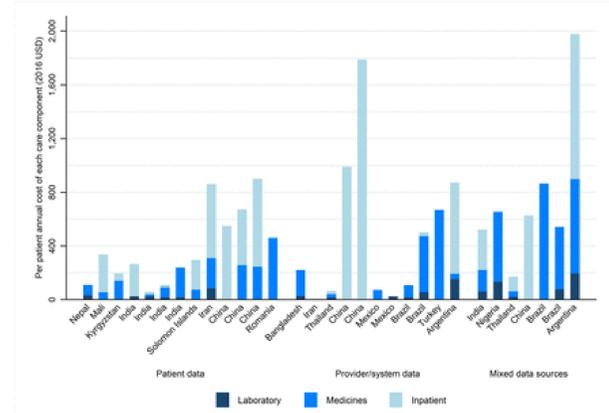


Figure 3: Showing the per-patient annual cost diabetes care components.

CONCLUSION

It has been a century since the discovery of insulin, effective collaborations should be patient-centered by scaling up access to essential medicines and devices for all, and universal health coverage for all should be made a reality. Advocacy should be amplified to create awareness about the challenges in access to insulin and innovative ways to improve access should be considered.

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