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**RISING COST OF INSULIN FORCING PEOPLE WITH DIABETES TO FORGO  
BASIC NEEDS, USE ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS TO SURVIVE**

**New Research Finds People With Diabetes Engaging in Underground  
Exchange to Access Needed Diabetes Supplies**

**HOUSTON – August 11, 2019** – Rising out of pocket costs and deductibles, along with escalating costs of diabetes medications and supplies, have increased the challenges to access for all, whether insured, uninsured, or under-insured. Two studies being presented at the [American Association of Diabetes Educators 2019 Annual Conference](#) in Houston revealed the patient- and family-level consequences when access to diabetes medications and supplies is limited due to cost.

Researchers examined 159 adults (129 adults living with diabetes; and 30 caregivers of children or spouses with diabetes) and found individuals with diabetes and their families are experiencing greater financial distress compared to the general population and nearly half cannot afford something their family needs due to diabetes costs. As such, many people with diabetes and their families are having to forgo basic needs, such as reliable food, clothing, transportation, and shelter in order to pay for diabetes care. Participants experienced higher financial distress compared to the general population which was associated with reduced self-management behaviors, such as skipping glucose checks or medication doses, and rationing medication doses.

“Many people living with diabetes and their families are experiencing a death or debt dilemma, being forced to choose between purchasing tools necessary for diabetes care and basic needs,” said lead author Michelle Litchman, Ph.D., FNP-BC, an assistant professor at the University of Utah College of Nursing. “These choices are influencing the physical and mental health of not just the person with diabetes, but the entire family. Out of necessity, some people are engaging in an underground exchange of diabetes medications and supplies in order to survive.”

Researchers identified a grassroots underground exchange system of trading, borrowing and purchasing diabetes medications and supplies as a solution to the rising cost of diabetes care. More than half of study participants have donated to others in need and over a third had received a donation. Data suggests this non-traditional means to accessing diabetes medications and supplies is preventing hospitalization and death, and also addresses bureaucratic delays in care. Those who experienced difficulty purchasing

diabetes medications and/or supplies were 6 times more likely to engage in underground trading and 3 times more likely to receive donated medications and/or supplies from others. Most often, trading occurred with online strangers.

“Donors donated to others because of altruism, noting that the “diabetes community” takes care of each other. Donors and traders were usually up front about potential issues with medications and supplies,” said Litchman. “While no serious negative outcomes were described, there were 3 cases in which individuals used medications or supplies they knew were expired or improperly stored and did so out of desperation.”

“Families affected by diabetes may require extra support in identifying safe and reliable means to access diabetes management tools. It is critical that healthcare professionals understand that their patients may be engaging in an underground exchange of diabetes medications and supplies out of necessity. Proactive discussions about safety and referrals to appropriate resources should occur as needed.”

#### **About AADE**

AADE is a multi-disciplinary professional membership organization dedicated to improving diabetes care through innovative education, management and support. With more than 14,000 professional members including nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, exercise specialists, and others, AADE has a vast network of practitioners working with people who have, are affected by or are at risk for diabetes. Learn more at [www.diabeteseducator.org](http://www.diabeteseducator.org), or visit us on Facebook (American Association of Diabetes Educators), Twitter (@AADEdiabetes) and Instagram (@AADEdiabetes).