'It would have been better if I had HIV instead of diabetes'  

To the Editor: 'Go ka bo go ne go le botoka go nna le HIV gona le bolwetse jwa sukiri' ('It would have been better if I had HIV instead of diabetes'). This flippant comment was overheard in a diabetes clinic waiting room in southern Botswana earlier this year. Although a new diagnosis of diabetes does not carry the stigma of a new HIV diagnosis, for many patients it nonetheless feels like a life sentence. While there are no local data to support the suggestion that type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) confers a worse prognosis than HIV, patients with T2DM in Botswana face at least as many obstacles to high-quality care as do patients with HIV.

A network of HIV counselling and testing facilities means that access to free, anonymous, same-day HIV testing is available throughout Botswana.[1] Despite an estimated prevalence of approximately 11%,[2] screening for diabetes is not routinised and most diagnoses are made when patients present late in the course of their disease. While there are no local data to support the suggestion that type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) confers a worse prognosis than HIV, patients with T2DM in Botswana face at least as many obstacles to high-quality care as do patients with HIV. Although a new diagnosis of diabetes does not carry the stigma of a new HIV diagnosis, for many patients it nonetheless feels like a life sentence. While there are no local data to support the suggestion that type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) confers a worse prognosis than HIV, patients with T2DM in Botswana face at least as many obstacles to high-quality care as do patients with HIV.

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