



Research to shed light on diabetes risk to migrant populations

Africans and Asians who migrate to Europe have a higher risk of diabetes than indigenous people as they adjust to a different diet and lifestyle. By looking at the development of diabetes in these groups, researchers hope to find out more about the disease and how to combat it both in Europe and worldwide.

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Four projects being financed from the EU's seventh research funding programme (FP7) are looking at how type-2 diabetes, which is linked with poor diet and an unhealthy lifestyle and represents about 90 % of all diabetes cases, develop in immigrant populations. These projects have received in total EUR 12 million out of the over EUR 400 million spent by the EU on tackling diabetes and related health projects under its 2007 to 2013 funding programme.

For example, the RODAM project is looking at why Ghanaian people living in Amsterdam, Berlin and London are at greater risk of diabetes than Ghanaians living in Ghana. The study, headed by Professor Karien Stronks, aims to discover the interaction between environment and genes – a field called epigenetics.

Prof. Stronks decided to go into the area of health and science at the age of 22, when she came to the conclusion that ‘your social position determines your health’. ‘I thought this unjust and for that reason it should be further studied,’ she said. Currently, RODAM has already started the process of data collection.

Four EU funded projects are looking at how diabetes cases develop in immigrant populations. © Sam DCruz / Shutterstock
Four EU funded projects are looking at how diabetes cases develop in immigrant populations. ©
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© Sam DCruz / Shutterstock Another project, called MEDIGENE, looks specifically at the risk of diabetes among immigrants in the Mediterranean region. Researchers are studying Albanians who migrated to Northern Italy; Greek and Turkish communities in Lyon; Romanians who recently migrated to Spain; and immigrants from North Africa living in France.

Two other projects, GIFTS and EPI-MIGRANT, are looking at the genetic and lifestyle predictors to obesity in South Asian people (mainly India, Bangladesh and Pakistan). Both include a focus on life style and nutrition from pre-conception to early childhood. They focus on identifying the risk factors underlying the increased rates of diabetes among South Asians in their home countries, countries in Europe and other parts of the world.

The goal is to understand better why people from South Asia are at greater risk and to enable the development of strategies to reduce diabetes among South Asians worldwide.

More info

RODAM

[EPI-MIGRANT](#)

[GIFTS](#)

[MEDIGENE](#)