

Letter to the Editor

Systemic Diabetes Mellitus

Dear Editor:

The term “diabetes,” meaning frequent urination, was coined by Aretus of Cappodocia (81–133 AD). Later, Thomas Willis of Britain (1675 AD) added the word “mellitus” to convey the idea of sweet, like honey.¹ Thinking of diabetes in this manner implies that the disease is simply a disease of carbohydrate metabolism. I propose that we should reevaluate what diabetes mellitus is. Specifically, we should think of it as “systemic diabetes mellitus.” Like systemic lupus erythematosus, it is a vasculitis with elevated inflammatory markers like C-reactive protein. It is a systemic, multi-organ disease. People with diabetes generally die a vascular death—myocardial infarction, stroke, or complications of extremity amputation. In today’s world, patients rarely die a glyceic death—diabetic ketoacidosis or hyperosmolar coma.

By thinking of “systemic diabetes mellitus” when we see a patient, we not only address glyceic issues like hemoglobin A1c and glucose monitoring, but also address and treat lipids, blood pressure, clotting factors, and inflammation.

REFERENCE

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—Philip L. Hooper, M.D.
Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine
University of Colorado Health Sciences Center
P.O. Box 245
Glen Haven, CO 80532

E-mail: phoopermd@direcway.com