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Beyond Undernutrition: Obesity and Cardiovascular Risk Burden among Orang Asli with Type 2 Diabetes in Batang Padang, Perak

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Introduction

Rising non-communicable diseases among Orang Asli communities in Malaysia revealed an epidemiologic transition in communities that were previously associated with undernutrition. Obesity is a modifiable factor that influences glycemic control and the risk of complications. This study aimed to describe the prevalence of obesity and coexisting cardiovascular risk factors among Orang Asli with type 2 diabetes in Batang Padang using routine clinic data.

Methods:

A cross-sectional descriptive analysis was conducted using clinic records of 102 Orang Asli adults with type 2 diabetes. Variables extracted included age, sex, duration of diabetes, body mass index (BMI), HbA1c, serum creatinine, retinopathy, hypertension, dyslipidaemia, medication use, and smoking status. Obesity was defined as BMI ≥ 30 kg/m². Glycaemic control was defined as HbA1c $\leq 6.5\%$.

Results:

The mean age of participants was 57.5 ± 10.6 years, with a mean diabetes duration of 7.7 ± 4.6 years. The mean BMI was 28.8 ± 6.9 kg/m². Overall, 39.2% were obese and 31.4% were overweight, indicating 70.6% above normal weight. Obesity was higher among women (42.9%) than men (31.2%). The mean HbA1c was $7.01 \pm 2.05\%$, with 40.2% not achieving glycaemic targets, and nearly half of individuals with obesity (45%) had HbA1c above 6.5%. Hypertension and dyslipidaemia were highly prevalent (82.4% and 69.6%, respectively). Retinopathy was documented in 15.7% of cases. Metformin was prescribed in 90.2% of patients.

Conclusion:

This study reveals a substantial burden of obesity and clustered cardiovascular risk factors among those with diabetes. These findings underscore an urgent need to re-scrutinise health strategies toward obesity prevention, weight management and risk reduction within culturally responsive diabetes care for this population.