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## Why three GCC countries are on the top ten countries for prevalence of diabetes: A close look into epidemiology, psychosocial and genetic factors

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Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar are three Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries that are recognized recently to be among the top ten countries for high diabetes prevalence. Those countries have similar cultural, psychosocial and economic structure and they all belong to one ethnicity with similar pattern of lifestyle change over the last three decades. Diabetes prevalence has reached a soaring rate from around 6% in 1990s, to 24% in Saudi Arabia, 23.1% in Kuwait and 22.9% in Qatar. This sudden change in diabetes prevalence trend needs to be investigated for better understanding of this disease nature. All countries share the same risk factors mainly obesity, high caloric intake and physical inactivity. They are also known for their high consanguinity rate that could have amplified the genetic factor especially when the Thrifty Gene Hypothesis is a high possibility. Growth rate in the Gulf States population is considered to be one of the highest globally, coupled with improved health services that had increased life expectancy from 53 years to 74 years through three decades which could be behind the increasing number of diabetic patients. There is a progressive increase in energy consumption that has exceeded 3000 kcal/person/day associated with increase in physical inactivity among GCC population. Other risk factors could also be behind the epidemic trend of this disease in this unique ethnic and geographic area. Future diabetes research focusing on this community may explore new avenues for better understanding of this disease etiology, risk factors and prevention strategies.

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