

## **MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL**

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### **European scientists meet in Cambridge to tackle diabetes**

Scientists from 9 European countries will meet in Cambridge this week (Tuesday 3 April) to launch the first phase of a project to tackle the worldwide rising tide of diabetes.

The new EU funded, large scale collaboration between Europe and India, called InterAct, will investigate how our genes and lifestyle interact to lead to diabetes and train young scientific researchers in this field. The four year project is being co-ordinated by Professor Nick Wareham, Director of the Medical Research Council Epidemiology Unit in Cambridge. InterAct will pool scientific knowledge in an effort to discover how genetic and lifestyle behaviour, particularly diet and physical activity interact in their influence on the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. It is hoped that these discoveries may help to prevent the development of the condition.

Diabetes is a chronic disorder of glucose metabolism in the body and is a major cause of heart disease and renal disease in people throughout Europe. It is the single biggest cause of preventable blindness, the leading cause of non-traumatic lower limb amputation and a major cause of premature mortality.

Diabetes is rising worldwide. In Europe, between 35-40% of people will develop diabetes mellitus over their lifetime, accounting for up to 10% of all expenditure on healthcare. It is, therefore, critical to understand all the factors behind the causes of diabetes and to develop preventive strategies to improve the health of the public and reduce the burden on health care systems.

Professor Wareham said, "InterAct is the largest study of its type in the world. Previous studies of gene-lifestyle interactions have been limited by their size and have tended to generate inconclusive results. The scale of the InterAct project and the unprecedented collaboration across different countries will help to resolve these issues and generate definitive results about how our genes and lifestyle are interacting to lead to type 2 diabetes."

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