ABSTRACT

Aim: To assess whether the presence of a diagnosis of diabetes mellitus, insulin dependent or non-insulin dependent, has any influence on employment, in terms of employment history and spectrum of employment of individuals.

Method: All patients aged over 16 who had been diagnosed with diabetes mellitus before the recognised retiring ages of 60 years for women and 65 for men were identified. Each of these was age and sex matched with five people without a diagnosis of diabetes. Questionnaires were posted to all those identified. A total of 835 questionnaires were sent out.

Results: The overall response rate was 62.9%, with all treatment groups well represented. People with diabetes were significantly more likely to be unable to work ($p = 0.027$). There was also a difference between the two groups (those with and without diabetes) with regard stopping shift work, although the numbers in the sub-groups had become small and so cast doubt on the statistical significance of this finding. All the people who stopped working shifts in the group with diabetes were tablet controlled. Early retirement for health reasons was not increased in those people with diabetes. There was poor level of notification of their condition to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority among those with diabetes, with 37.8% of those who should have declared not having done so. Some of those who had not declared their condition had driving jobs (25%). There was no evidence of a consistent approach to the avoidance of hypo glycaemia at the wheel.

Conclusions: The presence of a diagnosis of diabetes mellitus has specific impacts with regard to work. The overall experience of employment within this population did not vary greatly between the two groups. People with diabetes found themselves more often unable to work. Also those with diabetes were more likely to have to stop shift work. There remain a large number of people with diabetes who drive and have not notified their medical condition to the DVLA. This has implications for their treating physician and for their employer if they drive as part of their work and warrants further study.