

Prevalence, risk factors for diabetic macular edema explored in study

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The odds of having diabetic macular edema (DME), a leading cause of vision loss in patients with diabetes mellitus, appears to be higher in non-Hispanic black patients than white patients, as well as in those individuals who have had diabetes longer and have higher levels of hemoglobin A1c.

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About 347 million people worldwide have diabetes and [diabetic eye disease](#) is a leading cause of [vision loss](#) in patients between the ages of 20 and 74 years. Although the prevalence of diabetic retinopathy (DR) has been well characterized, less is known about the prevalence of DME among patients with diabetes in the United States.

The authors sought to estimate the prevalence of DME, as well as factors associated with the condition in adults. The study was an analysis of 1,038 patients age 40 and older with diabetes and valid eye photographs in the 2005 to 2008 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

Of the 1,038 individuals, 55 of them had DME, for an overall prevalence of 3.8 percent or estimated to be approximately 746,000 people in the 2010 U.S. population age 40 or older. There were no differences in prevalence by age or sex. But other factors associated with higher odds of having the condition include being non-Hispanic black, having diabetes longer and having [higher levels](#) of hemoglobin A1c.

"Given recent treatment advances in reducing vision loss and preserving vision in DME, it is imperative that all persons with diabetes receive early screening; this recommendation is even more important for those individuals at higher risk for DME." Rohit Varma, M.D., M.P.H., of the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, and colleagues wrote in their *JAMA Ophthalmology* paper.

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