Is diabetes increasing in South Australia?  

FINDINGS IN BRIEF
- The proportion of people with diabetes in the SA population, as assessed by self-report data, has increased significantly between 1991 and 2003.
- Using self-report data, 6.9% of the SA adult population (aged 15 years and over) have diabetes. This means that approximately 84,300 South Australian adults have diabetes.

The aim of this brief report is to describe the prevalence of diabetes over time in the South Australian population aged 15 years and over. The prevalence of diabetes in this population is also described by age group and sex.

METHODS
Data were obtained from South Australian Health Omnibus Surveys (HOS) conducted annually from 1991 to 2003.

This representative household interview survey of approximately 3000 people aged 15 years and over has a response rate of at least 70%. The data in these surveys came from large clustered samples and were weighted by age, gender, geographic location, and probability of selection in the household to accurately reflect the South Australian adult population.

The question asked in the survey to determine the prevalence of diabetes was “Have you ever been told by a doctor that you have diabetes?”.

Data analysis
The prevalence of diabetes was age and sex standardised to the 1996 Census to adjust for changes in the age-sex structure of the population. Significant changes in the prevalence of diabetes over time were examined using the $\chi^2$ for trend test. The prevalence over time was also analysed by sex and age group.

RESULTS
The age-sex standardised prevalence of diabetes in South Australia increased from 3.5% in 1991 to 6.9% in 2003 ($\chi^2$ for trend=141.6, $p<0.001$, see Figure 1), an increase of 3.4%. This means that approximately 84,300 South Australians aged 15 years and over had diabetes in 2003.

The prevalence of diabetes by age group for males and females is shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3 respectively. The prevalence of diabetes has significantly increased between 1991 and 2003 among males and females in all age groups ($p<0.01$).
CONCLUSIONS

The prevalence of diabetes in South Australia has significantly increased between 1991 and 2003. This trend has occurred among all age and sex groups.

The increasing prevalence of diabetes in the South Australian adult population is comparable with trends across Australia\(^1,2\). South Australian data also indicates that the prevalence of diabetes may be underestimated. It was recently found that for every four people who know they have diabetes, one person has diabetes but does not know it\(^3\).

Given that diabetes is significantly associated with serious complications such as cardiovascular disease, eye disease, kidney disease, and foot complications\(^1\), this increasing trend in diabetes will have significant associated financial, personal, health, and quality of life cost implications.

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References

