

# EyeConnect: A Multimethod, Interprofessional, CE-Certified Initiative to Improve **Diabetic Eve Care Across the Continuum**

**EYECONNECT** Prevent Blindness

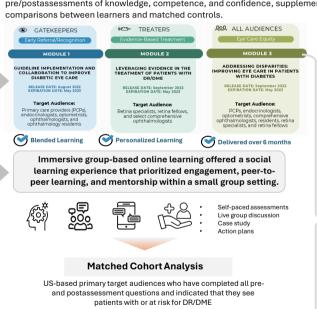
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## **BACKGROUND**

Preventable vision loss from diabetic retinopathy (DR) and diabetic macular edema (DME) remains a persistent challenge driven in part by delays in screening, diagnosis, referral, and treatment—particularly among underserved patient populations. [CDC 2020] DR is the leading cause of blindness among working-age adults in the United States. Since these challenges span multiple care settings and specialties, improving outcomes requires proactive engagement from all clinicians who manage patients with or at risk for DR/DME. As a result, Paradigm Medical Communications, LLC, in collaboration with the American Academy of Physician Associates, the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, the California Academy of Family Physicians, Endocrine Society, the National Minority Quality Forum's Center for Sustainable Health Care Quality and Equity, and Salus University Pennsylvania College of Optometry, developed the interprofessional education, CE-certified initiative Eye Connect: Take Action to Prevent Blindness for Your Patients With Diabetes, aiming to improve multidisciplinary collaboration, early recognition, and evidence-based treatment of DR/DMF across diverse clinical audiences.

## **METHODS:**

Between August 2022 and May 2023, 3 educational modules were launched, each comprising multiple activities designed to address specific gaps experienced throughout the DR/DME care continuum for gatekeepers (primary care physicians, endocrinologists, nurse practitioners, physician associates, optometrists, comprehensive ophthalmologists, ophthalmologists, and ophthalmology residents) and treaters (retina specialists and retina fellows). Outcomes were evaluated using qualitative and quantitative matched cohort data analyses, including pre/postassessments of knowledge, competence, and confidence, supplemented by a longitudinal study that included real-world clinical behavior



## 21 CE/CME multimodal activities

included live residents' and fellows' programs, live webinars, enduring materials, patient cases, and animated infographics











### LONGITUDINAL REAL-WORLD STUDY

OBJECTIVE: To measure and assess the impact of medical education programs on the behavior of learner healthcare practitioners (HCPs) as compared with nonlearner HCPs (control group) and assess the impact on outcomes of the patients managed/treated by these learner HCPs via a natient journey analysis

Learner HCPs completed their education between





#### Inclusion criteria: Included only patients seen/treated by learner HCPs

Only patients with a history of diabetes (type 2 or type 2) as identified via diagnosis codes found on medical claims



### Exclusion criteria

Patients must NOT have had prior anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) use during the lookback period

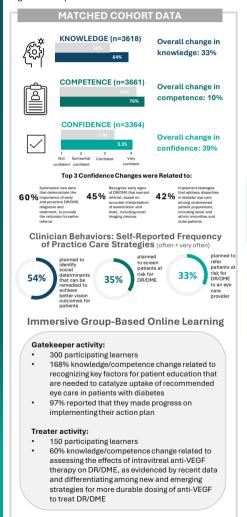


Patients must NOT have had a prior DR/DME diagnosis in the look-back period



## **RESULTS**

Collectively, participants reported potentially impacting over 2 million patients annually, with more than 80% managing individuals with or at risk for DR/DME on a weekly basis. Results from matched cohort pre- and postactivity assessments demonstrated significant improvements:



#### 9756 TOTAL LEARNERS

3519 US-based cohort learners reported seeing a combined total of 49,214 patients with or at risk for DR/DME each week

#### **TOP SPECIALTIES**





#### LONGITUDINAL REAL-WORLD IMPACT ANALYSIS



1083 clinicians had relevant claims data making them eligible for endpoint analysis and a total of 75,099 eligible patients seen by a clinician who had a control match were identified.

#### **ENDPOINT 1:** Referral of patients with DR/DME from gatekeepers to treaters

MODULE 1: GATEKEEPERS

Early Referral/Recognitio

The mean rate of referral decreased very slightly in both the learner and control groups. Learner HCPs tend to see/treat more target patients than nonlearner HCPs, which translates into higher volumes of referral and

#### ENDPOINT 2

Treatment of patients with DR/DME with anti-VEGF agents prior to the development of complications

The mean rate of treatment of patients with DR/DME with anti-VEGF agents prior to developing complications increased slightly for the learner group, suggesting a positive trend for this group, whereas it decreased for

## ENDPOINT 3

Volume of patients of an ethnic minority with DR/DME who experience barriers to treatment

ΩΩΩ MODULE 3: ALL AUDIENCES

Both the learner and control groups experienced growth in mean volume of ethnic minority patients with DR/DME per HCP. In addition, both group showed overall increases for each group in percentage of ethnic minority patients.

## PATIENT JOURNEY The average number of days between gatekeeper referral and treatment changed from: Control Group HCPs 132 101

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

The EveConnect educational initiative successfully demonstrated the value of CME in addressing complex, multidisciplinary healthcare challenges by equipping clinicians with the tools to recognize and act on early signs of DR/DME, bridging critical gaps in patient care.

The outcomes underscore the need for sustained efforts, including patient advocacy, increased funding for CME programs, and leveraging innovative technologies to enhance patient care. It is imperative to align HCPs so that they are able to work collaboratively to provide optimal eye health care to patients who have or are at risk for developing blindness or other eye-care related complications.

The need for continued education in 3 areas stood out:

- Recognize early signs of DR/DME that warrant referral, based on accurate interpretation of examination and tests, including novel imaging devices
- Identify barriers to diabetic eye care in vulnerable patient populations. such as older patients and racial and ethnic minorities
- Differentiate among new and emerging strategies for more durable dosing of anti-VEGF to treat DR/DMF

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:**

This educational initiative was supported by an independent medical educational grant from Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc. Paradigm Medical Communications, LLC extends our sincere gratitude to the expert faculty, steering committee, and reviewers who guided this initiative. We also thank our collaborators:















