


## Unveiling the Hidden Risks

### A Short storytelling based on the peer-reviewed paper:

 [Bam, N.E.](#), Chitha W, Ntsaba J, Nomatshila SC, Apalata T, Mabunda SA. Lifestyle determinants of diabetes mellitus amongst people living with HIV in the Eastern Cape province, *South Africa. Afr J Prim Health Care Fam Med.* 2022 May 12;14(1):e1-e7. doi: [10.4102/phcfm.v14i1.3256](https://doi.org/10.4102/phcfm.v14i1.3256). PMID: 35695437; PMCID: PMC9210181.

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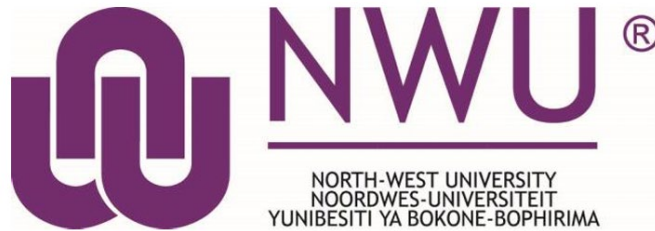
In the rural expanse of South Africa's Eastern Cape, where healthcare resources are often limited, a silent epidemic is unfolding. People living with HIV (PLWHIV), who have long been the focus of antiretroviral therapy (ART) efforts, are now facing an additional threat: type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM). A recent study conducted in the OR Tambo district has shed light on the lifestyle determinants contributing to this emerging crisis.

The research, led by Dr. Nokwanda E. Bam and her team, revealed that prolonged ART duration, particularly between 6 to 10 years, significantly increases the risk of developing T2DM among PLWHIV. Participants on long-term ART were found to be three times more likely to develop diabetes compared to those on shorter regimen. This finding underscores the need for healthcare providers to monitor metabolic health in patients undergoing extended ART.

Dietary habits also play a crucial role. The study found that individuals consuming four servings of fruits and vegetables daily had a higher likelihood of developing T2DM than those who consumed only one serving. This paradoxical finding suggests that dietary patterns, possibly influenced by local food availability and cultural practices, may contribute to the increased risk.

Physical activity levels further complicate the picture. While engaging in vigorous work activities was associated with a decreased probability of T2DM, participation in moderate sports like soccer was linked to a higher likelihood of developing the disease. This unexpected result highlights the complexity of lifestyle factors and their impact on health outcomes.

The study's findings call for a multifaceted approach to healthcare in rural South Africa. Routine screening for T2DM among PLWHIV, coupled with personalized lifestyle counseling focusing on balanced nutrition and appropriate physical activity, is essential. By addressing



these lifestyle determinants, healthcare providers can help mitigate the risk of T2DM and improve the overall quality of life for people living with HIV in these underserved communities.

This research not only adds to the understanding of the interplay between HIV and diabetes but also serves as a clarion call for integrated healthcare strategies that consider the unique challenges faced by rural populations. As the study suggests, the path to better health outcomes lies in a holistic approach that encompasses both medical treatment and lifestyle modifications.

