**Inclusion criteria:**
474 doctors were to include all patients on their practice list fulfilling the following criteria:

1) Diabetes mellitus diagnosed from 1 March 1989 to 28 February 1991 (71 doctors volunteered for a 1-year extension of this period)
2) Based on hyperglycaemic symptoms and/or raised blood glucose values measured in general practice, the diagnosis was established by a single whole blood or plasma glucose concentration ≥ 7.0/8.0 mmol/l measured at a major laboratory
3) Age 40 years or older at diagnosis

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**Eligible patients (n = 1590)**

**Primary exclusions:**
- Severe somatic disease (n = 50)
- Severe mental illness (n = 50)
- Declined to consent (n = 62)

**Secondary exclusions:**
- Diagnosis not confirmed (n = 47)

**Patients included in main study (n = 1381)**

- Missing eye examination at diabetes diagnosis (n = 137)
- Missing measurement of visual acuity (n = 3)

**Patients with visual acuity measured at diabetes diagnosis and included in the present study (n = 1241)**

- Died before follow-up (n = 264)
- Withdrew consent (n = 7)
- Lost to follow-up (n = 4)
- Missing eye examination at follow-up (n = 154)
- Missing measurement of visual acuity (n = 5)

**Patients with visual acuity measured at diagnosis and 6-year follow-up (n = 807)**