

## Getting a grip on diabetes

### Patients urged to play part in 'global epidemic'

By SARAH GREEN, TORONTO SUN

Ram Krishna is already one in two million.

By the end of the decade, the 57-year-old Toronto man will be one in three million Canadians with diabetes.

"There is a global epidemic of diabetes," Dr. Bernard Zinman, director of the Leadership Sinai Centre for Diabetes at Mount Sinai Hospital, warned yesterday.

"This is not going away. This is going to have an incredible impact."

The Canadian Diabetes Association hosted a forum -- both Krishna and Zinman were panelists -- urging sufferers and their families to get serious about the disease.

About 7.6% of Ontario residents have diabetes and there are 53,000 new cases every year. There will be a million cases in 10 years, an alarming 72% increase.

Krishna was diagnosed 23 years ago in New Delhi when he lost a great deal of weight and his physician brother suggested he get his blood sugar tested. The result was three times normal levels.

"It did come as a surprise," said Krishna, who has a family history of diabetes.

He takes daily medication -- not insulin, works out six times a week and limits rice and other favourite foods that cause his blood sugar to spike.

"I never thought of taking a holiday from diabetes. One has to be on the ball," he said.

"There are occasions when I tend to be lax -- I'm human, too. Doctors can do a lot but patients have to take charge."

Research shows patients aren't managing the blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol well -- about 7% -- putting them at risk for blindness, kidney failure and limb amputations, Zinman said.

Patients pay out more than \$2,000 a year for diabetes medications and supplies -- 6.8% of the average annual income. "If they can't afford the \$2,000-plus out of pocket, they can't afford to manage their diabetes," said Meg Archibald, with the association's national advocacy council.