

**Media Enquiries:**

Inès Hammer

T: +33 1 55 00 40 66

[ihammer@its.jnj.com](mailto:ihammer@its.jnj.com)

**New EIU report challenges policy response to diabetes epidemic in the Gulf region**

*Report released ahead of World Diabetes Day calls for a coherent region-wide approach to tackle the growing diabetes burden*

**Brussels, Belgium, 11th November, 2015** – A new report released today entitled *Diabetes in the Gulf: The policy challenge* calls on policymakers in the Gulf region to do more to address the growing challenge of diabetes. The report, developed by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) and sponsored by Janssen, highlights the sharp rise in prevalence of diabetes and the associated rising economic costs and calls for a coherent region-wide approach to tackle the issue.

Diabetes is a ticking time bomb in the Gulf region. Data from the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) shows that prevalence of the disease has reached 23.9% of the adult population in Saudi Arabia, 23.1% in Kuwait and 19.8% Qatar, over twice the global average of 8.3%. Overweight and obesity, brought on by rising economic prosperity, are to blame for driving the diabetes epidemic in this region, with up to 75% of adults and up to 40% of under-18s overweight or obese.

Consequently, the financial burden of diabetes in the region is high and has the potential to rise even further. The report notes that US\$16.8bn was spent on diabetes care in 2014, according to estimates from the IDF, with this figure set to rise to US\$24.7bn by 2035. Additionally, as people develop diabetes at a younger age, a growing number of patients are living with the disease for longer, significantly increasing the per-capita costs of patient care.

With healthcare investment in the Gulf region ranging from 2.2% to 4.9% of GDP in 2012, far below the OECD average of 8.9% of GDP, there is significant scope to increase healthcare investment levels in this region. However, it is important to note that it is not just about *the amount* of money spent on dealing with diabetes, but *how* this money is invested. The report highlights that while several initiatives are being implemented in the

Gulf region, including those targeting specific aspects of the disease such as screening, the response is not consistent throughout the region.

“Our research has revealed a number of opportunities to help combat the rise of diabetes in Gulf region,” said Martin Koehring, report editor, EIU. “From strengthening primary healthcare, to introducing tough new legislation and engaging community leaders, policymakers must adopt regional practices to tackle the growing burden of diabetes in the Gulf.”

“The rise of diabetes in the Gulf region is a significant public health concern and represents a substantial risk to further development,” said Jane Griffiths, Company Group Chairman, Janssen Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA). “Janssen is committed to investing in local and regional initiatives to help tackle the burden of diabetes in the region. We hope this report will offer valuable insights into the burden of the disease and encourage change in how policymakers combat the disease.”

The *Diabetes in the Gulf: The policy challenge* report can be read online at:

<http://www.janssen-emea.com/node/1379>

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **About the *Diabetes in the Gulf: The policy challenge* report**

*Diabetes in the Gulf: The policy challenge* is an Economist Intelligence Unit report, sponsored by Janssen. It assesses the current status and potential impact of diabetes in the six Gulf Co-operation Council states—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE; reviews current approaches to tackling the disease in the region; and explores further possible opportunities to help combat diabetes. In this report, diabetes refers to type 2 diabetes.

In July-August 2015 The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) conducted 18 interviews with experts on diabetes in the Gulf region, including policymakers, policy advisers, academics and health practitioners. The insights from these in-depth interviews appear throughout the report.

### **About The Economist Intelligence Unit**

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is the world leader in global business intelligence. It is the business-to-business arm of The Economist Group, which publishes The Economist newspaper. The EIU helps executives make better decisions by providing timely, reliable and impartial analysis on worldwide market trends and business strategies. More information can be found at [www.eiu.com](http://www.eiu.com) or [www.twitter.com/theEIU](https://www.twitter.com/theEIU).

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