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UNLV RESEARCHERS AMONG FIRST IN THE NATION TO STUDY ELDERS' ABILITY TO SELF-MANAGE DIABETES

*Unique Study to Examine How Cognitive Ability, Dexterity and Vision
Contribute to Control of Blood Sugar in State's Elderly Population*

LAS VEGAS – May 6, 2008 – Nearly 20 percent of Nevadans over 60 currently live with Type 2 diabetes, making it one of the most prevalent chronic diseases affecting the state's aging population.

While the ability to self manage Type 2 diabetes on a daily basis is critical to sustain quality of life and delay potentially life threatening complications, little is known about the factors that prevent many older adults from effectively managing their disease.

A team of researchers from UNLV and Nevada State College is among the first in the nation to examine how various factors, such as decreasing vision and cognitive functioning, affect an individual's ability to self manage their diabetes. Though previous studies have explored how individual factors affect diabetes control, few have analyzed how these factors both individually and collectively contribute to self-management.

Led by UNLV School of Nursing professor Lori Candela, the research team will compile a sample group of approximately 100 Type 2 diabetics over the age of 60 to participate in a short series of questionnaires and tests to gauge cognitive, visual and dexterity levels. The factors will be analyzed in relation to blood sugar levels to determine relationships between the factors and diabetes management in elders.

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"The increasing incidence of Type 2 diabetes is occurring at the same time that life expectancy is on the rise, making daily self-management of diabetes vital for individuals to live a more healthful life," said Candela. "By shedding new light on the factors that affect one's ability to self-manage diabetes, healthcare providers will be able to develop appropriate and targeted interventions for patients on a case by case basis."

Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes, representing more than 90 percent of all diabetes cases. Effective self management of Type 2 diabetes involves a combination of maintaining a healthy weight through diet and exercise, managing blood sugar and attending regular medical exams. Research also shows that health literacy, including knowledge of diabetes and its risk factors, is critical to diabetes control.

The study is supported by the UNLV School of Nursing. Collaborating on the project with Candela are Jean Benzel-Lindley, associate professor of nursing at Nevada State College; and Karla Dalley, assistant professor of nursing at UNLV.

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UNLV is a doctoral-degree granting institution of 28,000 students and approximately 3,000 faculty and staff. More than 220 undergraduate, master's and doctoral degrees are offered. Founded in 1957, UNLV is located on more than 350 acres in dynamic Southern Nevada. The university is classified in the category of Research Universities (high research activity) by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.