

# Evaluating the need for depression and diabetes distress screening in veterans with type 1 diabetes

Susana Barreiro, MD; Maria Adriana Yanez Bello, MD; Maria Borja Pesantez, MD; Maddison Saalinger, RD CDCES; Sabina Casula, MD; Violet Laghari, MD; Francesco Vendrame, MD PhD.

## Background

- The American Diabetes Association recommends implementing screening protocols for psychosocial concerns, including diabetes distress and depression, in individuals with diabetes.
- Veterans tend to have higher rates of many mental health disorders compared with non-veteran civilian populations
- Limited data exists about mental health disorders among veterans with type 1 diabetes (T1D).

## Objective

- The objective of this pilot study was to evaluate the need for depression and diabetes distress screening in veterans with T1D.

## Methods

- We administered the Eight-Item Patient Health Questionnaire for Depression (PHQ-8) and the Type 1-Diabetes Distress Assessment System (T1-DDAS) to 49 veterans with T1D attending the Miami Veterans Affairs (VA) Healthcare System in Miami, Florida.
- Data are expressed as percentages and mean  $\pm$  SD.

## Results

- The questionnaires were completed by 30/49 (61%) veterans with T1D (Table 1).

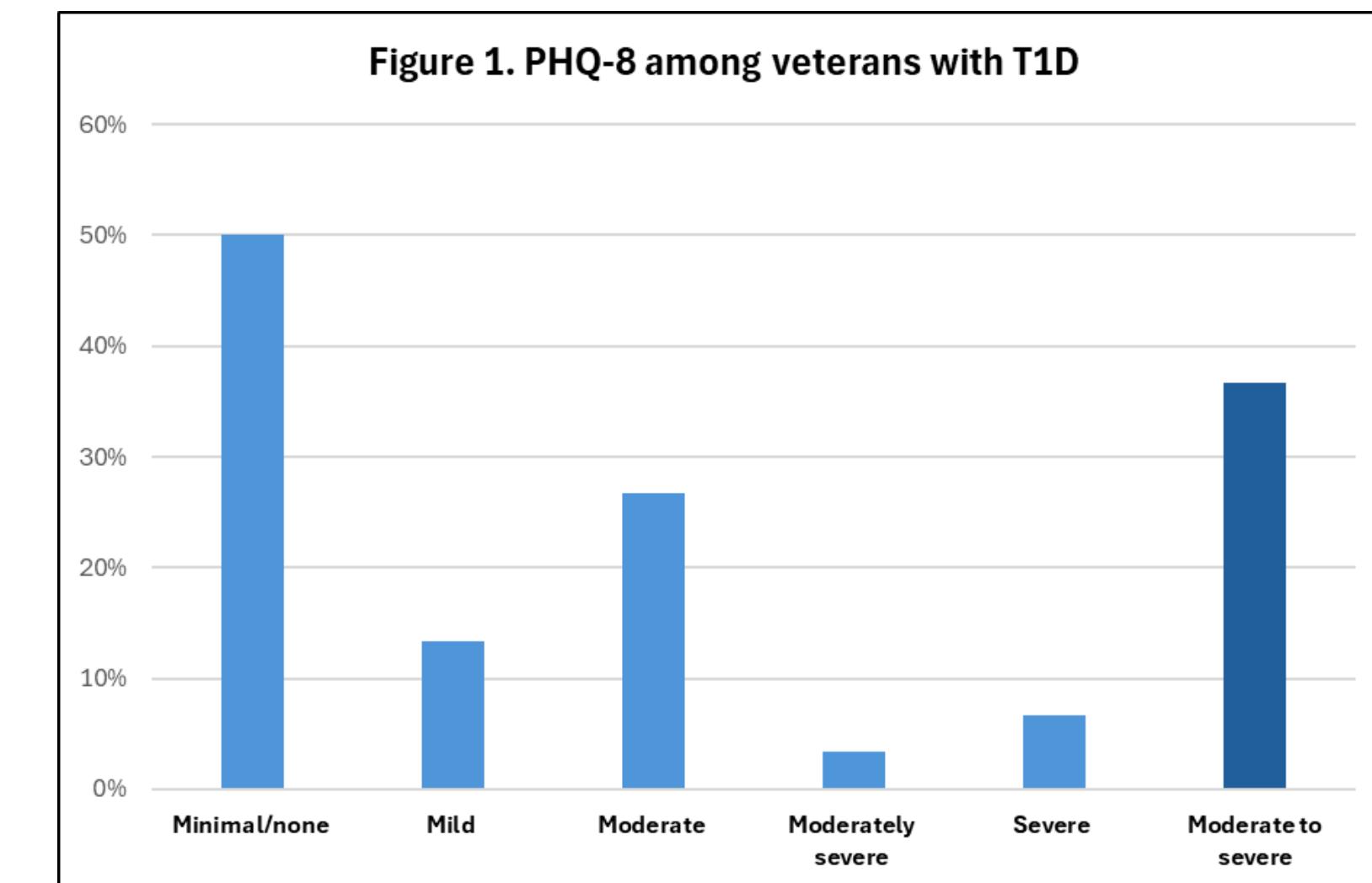
**Table 1. Characteristics of the patients**

n	30
Age, years	52.9 $\pm$ 13.8
Sex, male, %	97
Ethnicity, %	
WNH	37
WH	43
B	17
Other	3
Insulin pump therapy, %	57
HbA1c, %	7.1 $\pm$ 1.1

WNH, White Non-Hispanic; WH, White-Hispanic; B, Black.

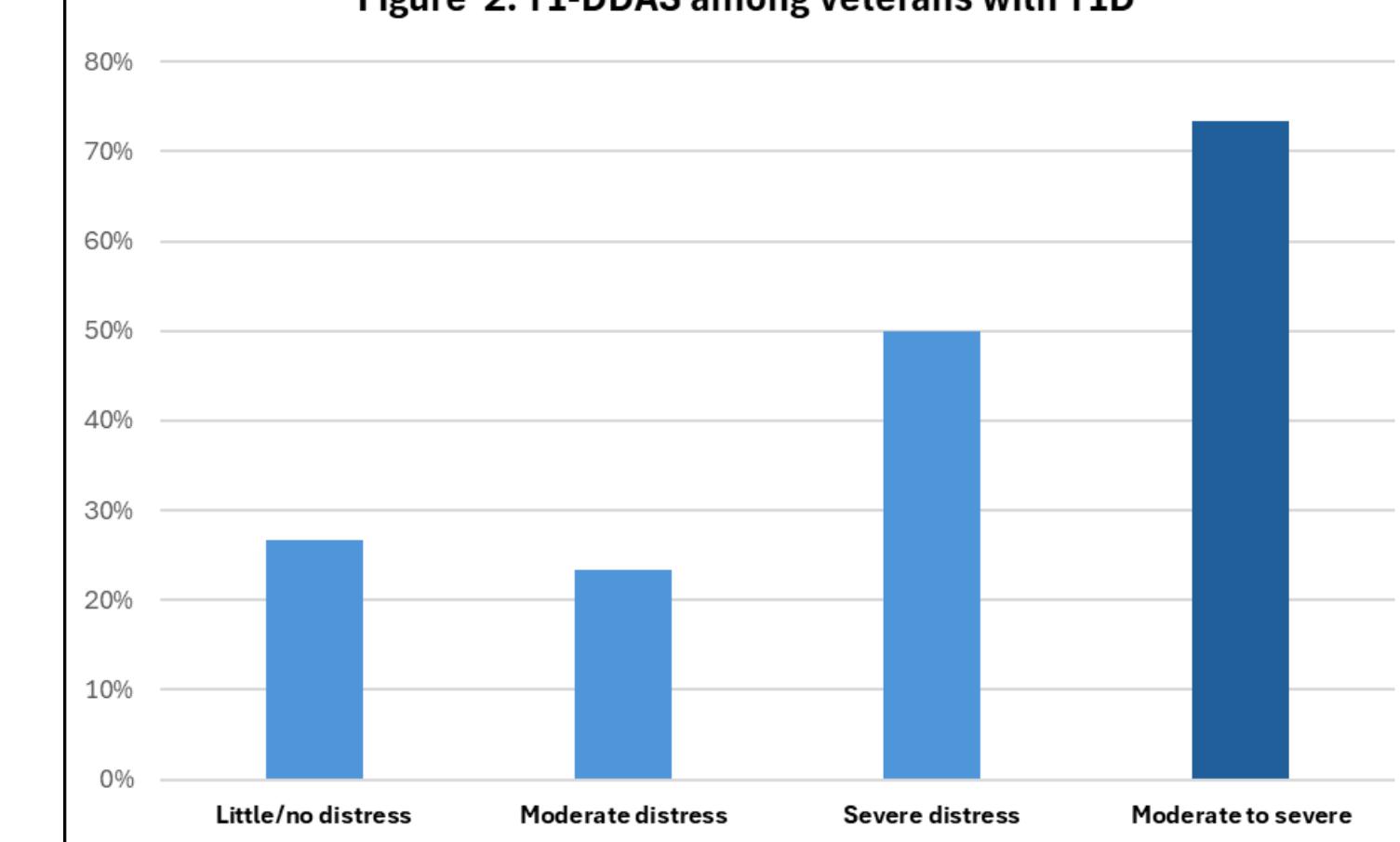
- Moderate to severe depression (score  $\geq$ 10) was present in 37% of participants (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. PHQ-8 among veterans with T1D**



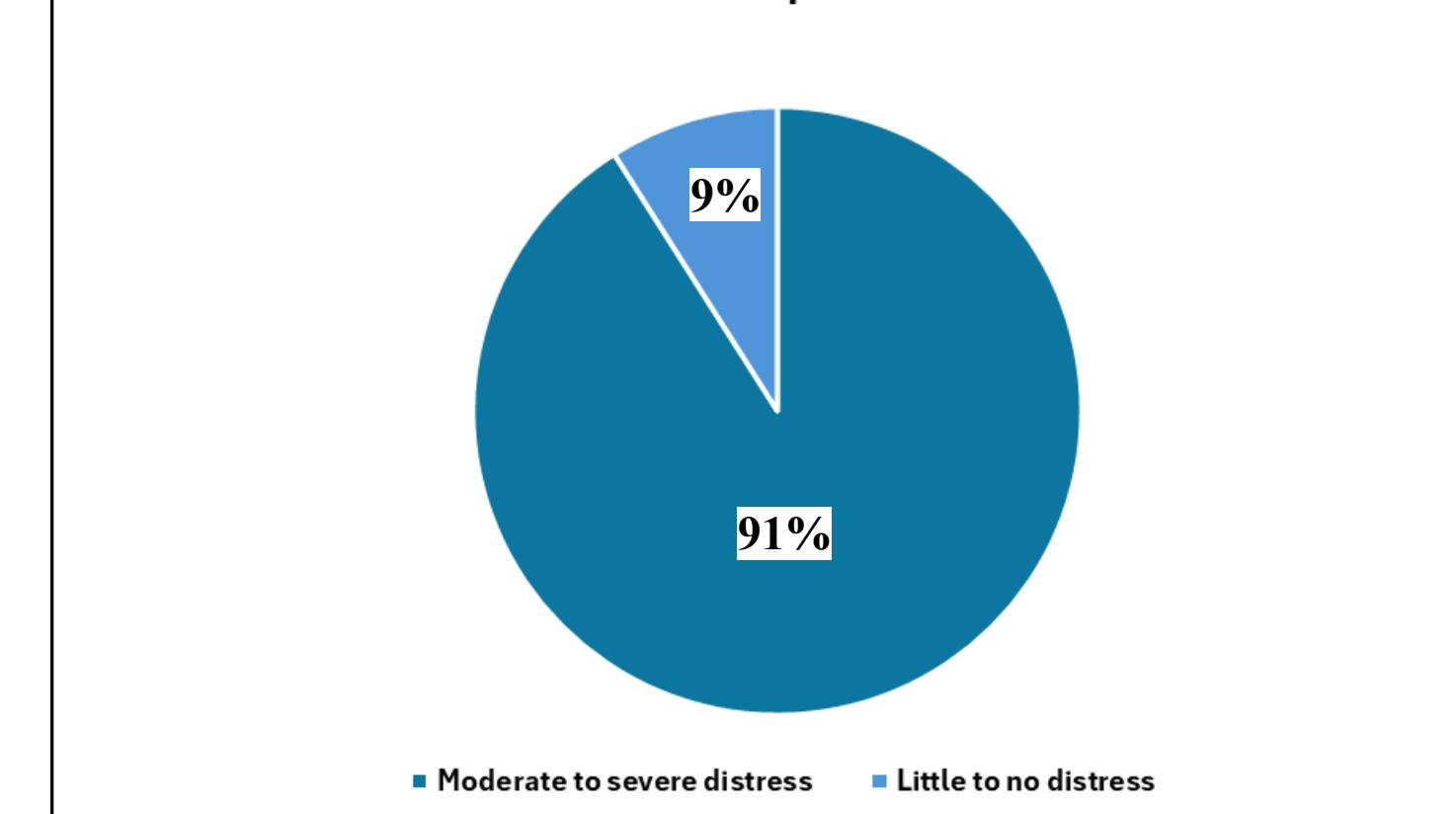
- Moderate to severe diabetes distress (score  $\geq$  2) was observed in 73% of participants (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. T1-DDAS among veterans with T1D**



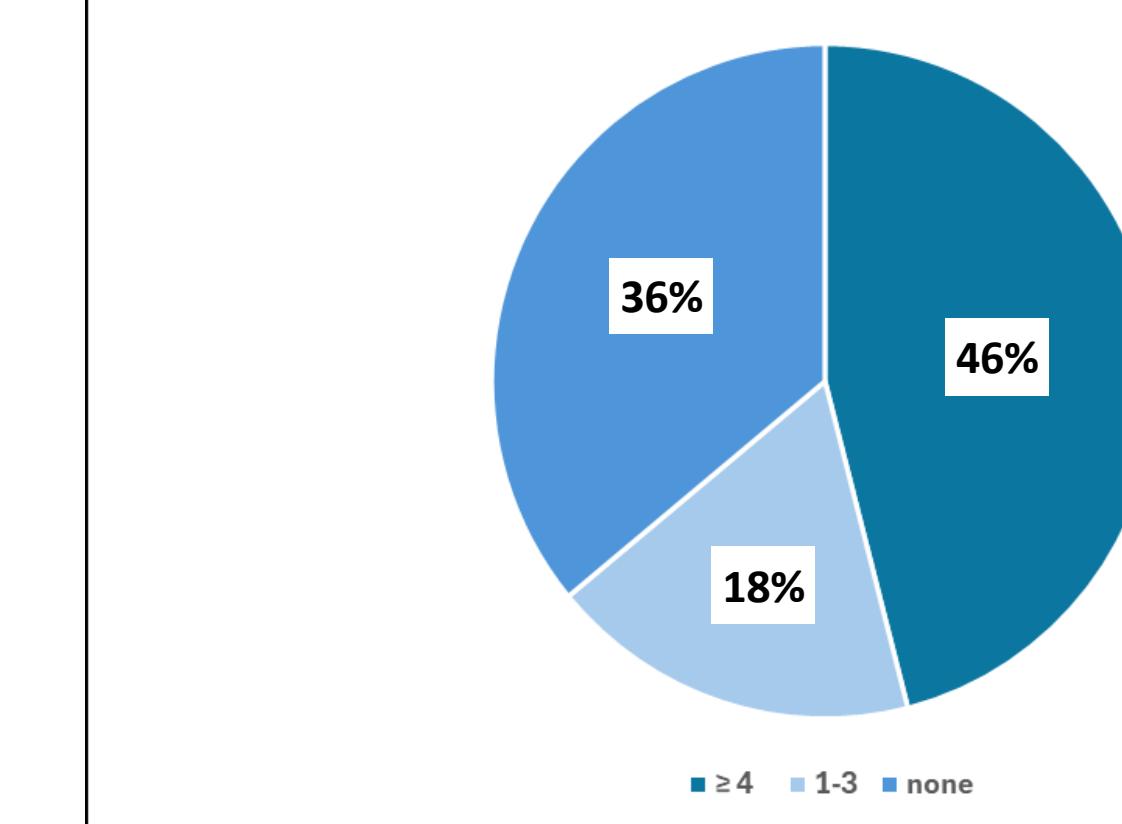
- Among veterans with moderate to severe depression (score  $\geq$ 10), 91% had moderate to severe diabetes distress (score  $\geq$ 2) (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. T1-DDAS among veterans with T1D and moderate to severe depression**



- 46% of participants with moderate to severe depression (score  $\geq$ 10) had  $\geq$ 4 mental health visits during the past year, but 36% had none (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Number of mental health visits among veterans with T1D and moderate to severe depression during the past year**



## Conclusions

- This pilot study suggests that diabetes distress is common among veterans with T1D and that screening should be implemented in this population, particularly in those with depression.
- Interventions for diabetes distress which are proven to be effective in this challenging population are also likely to be successful in the civilian population with T1D.