

Understand diabetes and take control: World Diabetes Day 2009

Phil Riley and Kerrita McLaughlyn



The World Diabetes Day campaign is led by the International Diabetes Federation and its member associations. Created by the Federation and the World Health Organization in 1991, World Diabetes Day is an official United Nations Day. The campaign draws attention to issues of paramount importance to the diabetes world and keeps diabetes firmly in the public spotlight. The campaign is represented by a blue circle logo that was adopted after the passage of the United Nations Resolution on diabetes. The blue circle is the global symbol of diabetes and signifies the unity of the global diabetes community in response to the diabetes epidemic. World Diabetes Day is celebrated every year on November 14. This year sees the first of a five-year campaign. Phil Riley and Kerrita McLaughlyn report.

Diabetes Education and Prevention is the World Diabetes Day theme for the period 2009 to 2013. The campaign calls on all those responsible for diabetes care to understand diabetes and take control. For people with diabetes, this is a message about empowerment through education. For governments, it is a call to implement effective strategies and policies for the prevention and management of diabetes in or-

der to safeguard the health of their citizens with and at risk of diabetes. For healthcare providers, it is a call to improve knowledge so that evidence-based recommendations are put into practice. For the general public, it is a call to understand the serious impact of diabetes and know, where possible, how to avoid or delay diabetes and its complications. The key messages of the campaign are:

- Know the diabetes risks and know the warning signs.
- Know how to respond to diabetes and who to turn to.
- Know how to manage diabetes and take control.

Campaign objectives

The objectives for the current campaign were informed by the work of the Federation's Consultative Section



Achieving a healthy body weight and taking moderate exercise, at least 30 minutes of daily exercise, can help prevent the development of type 2 diabetes.

on Diabetes Education and its Task Force on Epidemiology and Prevention. The objectives were further informed by the World Health Organization's 2008 to 2013 Action Plan for the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases. This document is available online in English at www.who.int/nmh/en/.

The campaign goals are to:

- encourage governments to implement and strengthen policies for the prevention and control of diabetes and its complications
- disseminate tools to support national and local initiatives for the prevention and management of diabetes and its complications
- illustrate the importance of evidence-based education in the prevention and management of diabetes and its complications
- raise awareness of the warning signs of diabetes and promote action to encourage early diagnosis

- raise awareness of and promote action to reduce the main modifiable risk factors for type 2 diabetes
- raise awareness and promote action to prevent or delay the complications of diabetes.

“Education is of the essence in preventing diabetes complications and central to the World Diabetes Day campaign.”

Education

Diabetes is difficult. It imposes life-long demands on people with diabetes and their families, who have to make a multitude of decisions related to managing diabetes. People with diabetes need to monitor their blood glucose, take medication, exercise regularly and adjust their eating habits. Furthermore, they may have to face issues related to living with the complications of diabetes and may need to make considerable

psychological adjustments. As outcomes are largely based on the decisions they take, it is of paramount importance that people with diabetes receive ongoing, high-quality diabetes education that is tailored to their needs and delivered by skilled healthcare providers.

Without diabetes education, people with the condition are less prepared to take informed decisions, make behavioural changes, address the psychosocial issues presented by diabetes and, ultimately, may be ill-equipped to manage their diabetes effectively. Poor management will result in poor health outcomes and an increased likelihood of developing complications. Education is therefore of the essence in preventing diabetes complications and central to the World Diabetes Day campaign.

Most people with diabetes cannot access education due to factors such as cost and the lack of appropriate services. Many more may be unaware of

the services that do exist or perhaps not convinced of the benefits that diabetes education can bring. They may feel, for example, that interaction with their doctor provides all the education they need. The World Diabetes Day campaign will promote the importance of structured diabetes education programmes as central to the prevention and control of diabetes, and advocate for increased opportunities for diabetes education within healthcare systems and communities.

Diabetes education is particularly lacking in developing countries. Access to education is also lacking in many developed countries because there are not enough educators or centres to cope with the rising number of people with diabetes. IDF is working to identify and fill the gaps in the provision of diabetes education worldwide. In 2003, the Federation produced International Standards for Diabetes Education – available online at www.idf.org/diabetes_education, along with the IDF's International Curriculum for Diabetes Health Professional

Education. A revised and updated version of the Standards will be published later this year.

As reported previously in *Diabetes Voice*, IDF's educational framework encompasses action for change on multiple fronts, including a commitment to establishing a network of recognized IDF centres of education that can advance the development of diabetes education in every region. IDF has been involved extensively in promoting diabetes education by developing the international standards and curricula in various languages, providing education through regional associations, providing education materials, lobbying, and disseminating the evidence.

Diabetes education is best provided by a multidisciplinary team. While multidisciplinary education is available in some countries, in many others it is not, and its value is not fully recognized by the medical profession. The World Diabetes Day campaign sets out to challenge this. It is hoped that the awareness raised by the campaign will encourage healthcare

systems everywhere to recognize the need to provide structured education and help establish access to skilled diabetes educators as the right of every person with diabetes.

“IDF is committed to establishing a network of centres of education that can advance diabetes education globally.”

Primary prevention

At present, type 1 diabetes cannot be prevented. The environmental triggers that are thought to generate the process that results in the destruction of the body's insulin-producing cells are still under investigation. Type 2 diabetes, however, can be prevented in many cases by maintaining a healthy weight and being physically active. Studies in China, Finland and the USA have confirmed this.

The last 30 years have seen a rapid increase in type 2 diabetes. Today, there are more than 250 million people with diabetes; unless action is taken, IDF predicts that the total number of people with diabetes will reach 380 million by 2025. It is increasingly apparent that the explosion in diabetes will overwhelm healthcare systems everywhere and subvert the gains of economic development. It is important for the diabetes world to communicate a consistent message that investment in diabetes education and diabetes prevention programmes will save money in the long term and deliver significant returns in quality of life for people with diabetes and people at high risk of diabetes.

“Investment in diabetes education and diabetes prevention programmes will save lives and money.”

The World Diabetes Day campaign's approach to primary prevention is informed by the IDF Consensus on Type 2 Diabetes Prevention. The Consensus proposes a simple three-step plan for the prevention of type 2 diabetes in those at increased risk.

IDF recommends that all people at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes be identified through opportunistic and self-screening. People at high risk can be easily identified through a simple questionnaire to assess risk factors such as age, waist circumference, family history, cardiovascular history and gestational history. Once identified, those at high risk should have their plasma glucose levels measured by a health professional to detect impaired fasting glucose or impaired glucose tolerance, both of which indicate an increased risk for type 2 diabetes.

“There is an important role for diabetes educators to help people understand the risks and set realistic goals to improve health.”

There is substantial evidence that achieving a healthy body weight and taking moderate exercise can help prevent the development of type 2 diabetes. In primary prevention, there is an important role for diabetes educators to help people understand the risks and set realistic goals to improve health. IDF recommends a goal of at least 30 minutes of daily exercise, such as brisk walking, swimming, cycling or dancing. Regularly walking for at least 30 minutes per day, for example,

has been shown to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes by around 40%.

World Diabetes Day will promote greater awareness of the risk factors for diabetes and encourage best-practice sharing in diabetes prevention. The campaign will ask diabetes stakeholders to call on UN Member States to follow through on the promise of the UN Resolution on diabetes and develop national policies for the prevention, treatment and care of diabetes in line with the sustainable development of their healthcare systems.

Celebrate World Diabetes Day

Passed in December 2006, UN Resolution 61/225 invited all Member States, relevant UN organizations and other international organizations, as well as civil society, to observe World Diabetes Day. Despite an impressive rise in the numbers engaging in the campaign, much remains to be done to realize the ambition of the Resolution.

The World Diabetes Day campaign aims to increase public, media and government participation. The aim of the public and media relations strategy is to ensure that the campaign messages reach these audiences in a manner that is useful and easy to understand. The 2009 campaign will see increased efforts to reach out to our target audiences by replicating past successes and building on recent experience with social media.

Over recent years, the campaign extended its reach through various social networking sites in order to seek new audiences and further engage the campaign's global network of supporters.

IDF calls on all diabetes stakeholders to join the World Diabetes Day campaign and help make these goals a reality. Support the campaign and help bring diabetes to light!

You can find World Diabetes Day at www.worlddiabetesday.org and at the following:

Facebook

- World Diabetes Day Group at www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=100331240644&ref=mf
- Become a 'fan' of World Diabetes Day at www.facebook.com/pages/Brussels-Belgium/World-Diabetes-Day/67935817021?ref=mf

Twitter

- <http://twitter.com/wdd>

YouTube

- World Diabetes Day Channel at www.youtube.com/worlddiabetesday
- International Diabetes Federation Channel at www.youtube.com/user/IntDiabetesFed

Flickr

- World Diabetes Day group at www.flickr.com/groups/wdd
- International Diabetes Federation at www.flickr.com/photos/idf/sets/

Myspace

- www.myspace.com/officialworld-diabetesday

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