

The IDF framework for diabetes education – current status and future prospects

Margaret McGill and Helen McGuire

The type 2 diabetes epidemic is having a growing impact on individuals, communities, healthcare systems and national economies. There are an estimated 246 million people worldwide diagnosed with some form of diabetes; it is estimated that, by 2025, this number will grow to 380 million. In developing regions, the growth rate of diabetes is 70%, which is greater than that in other parts of the world. Policy-makers, healthcare professionals and healthcare providers already struggle to meet the needs of so many affected people; it is estimated that only 5% of those with the condition receive optimal care, while 6% of total world mortality is attributable to diabetes. Research findings provide direction on approaches to improving outcomes, but recommendations can be put into action only if people with diabetes, physicians and other healthcare providers receive education and support to integrate new knowledge and best practices into their approach to diabetes management. This article outlines the educational strategy of the International Diabetes Federation and highlights some of its achievements, current activities and wider objectives.

The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) is committed to advancing diabetes education and management in order to improve outcomes and quality of life for people with the condition. IDF strongly believes that all people with

diabetes, wherever they live and whatever their gender, ethnicity or social status, have the right to life-long, high-quality diabetes education delivered by skilled professionals. Furthermore, we advocate that it is the responsibility

of all governments to commit to providing readily accessible diabetes services to their citizens living with the condition. This commitment involves the promotion of self-management as an overarching strategy, as reflected in a

statement, published in the International Standards for Diabetes Education, of one of IDF's key principles:

Every person affected by diabetes and pre-diabetes has the right to receive high-quality self-management education and care. The purpose of diabetes self-management education and ongoing diabetes self-management support is to prepare those affected by diabetes to make informed decisions, cope with the demands of living daily with a complex chronic disease and make changes in their behaviour that support their self-management efforts. The ultimate goal is to reduce the burden of diabetes and pre-diabetes on individuals, families, communities and the healthcare system and by supporting good health to prevent or delay the onset of diabetes or related long-term complications.¹

IDF has a history of providing educational opportunities, tools and guidelines – facilitated by its Consultative Section on Diabetes Education and, most recently, the appointment of a global education manager with responsibility for the implementation of IDF's educational strategy.

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Educational opportunities offered in isolation are insufficient to change the experience and health outcomes of people with diabetes worldwide. Indeed, very similar needs are shared

by people with diabetes and those working in healthcare. Both groups require high-quality evidenced-based education; they need methods to integrate that education into their life or profession; and they need a healthcare system that supports best practices – including a multidisciplinary team-based approach led by people with diabetes. The activities of IDF strive to meet these needs, with a focus on education, tools and system change.

A five-year campaign

While engendering system change is a complex and difficult task, requiring top-down and bottom-up strategies, it does not represent an insurmountable challenge. In order to increase awareness of the potential for preventing and delaying the onset of diabetes and diabetes-related complications using sustainable, cost-effective and culturally appropriate ongoing interventions, IDF is embarking on a five-year World Diabetes Day campaign to promote widely accessible diabetes education and prevention. This campaign constitutes an opportunity for diabetes stakeholders worldwide to highlight the importance of currently available evidenced-based education for all people affected by diabetes.

In many countries, where little or no funding is available to support diabetes education, the role of the diabetes educator is either under-acknowledged or wholly unrecognized. As a result, many millions of people, lacking access to vital basic information, suffer unnecessarily the disabling and potentially life-threatening complications of diabetes. It is of the utmost importance that the role of the educator be recog-

nized as an integral part of a multidisciplinary team-based approach to diabetes management.

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People with the condition and all other members of the team – including diabetes specialist physicians, specialist nurses, mental health professionals, foot care specialists – require access to high-quality, state-of-the-art education. According to a recent report by IDF-Europe and the Federation of European Nurses in Diabetes (FEND), less than 50% of the EU Member States have a national framework or plan for diabetes² – evidence of the importance of continued efforts to voice the needs of those with diabetes. We all should consider what can be done in our areas to advocate for education and prevention during the extended World Diabetes Day campaign. (More information on the campaign will be provided in a coming issue of Diabetes Voice.)

Centres of excellence

Having identified the need to address multiple challenges in the field of education and prevention, and involve a constellation of players, IDF's education framework encompasses action on a number of fronts: influencing system change and enhancing access to good-quality diabetes education, raising awareness, engaging in



Conversation Maps are culturally appropriate interactive learning tools that are used in group sessions of people affected by diabetes.

social and political advocacy, and developing a network of recognized IDF Centres of Education with a commitment to advancing education in each region.

These IDF Centres of Education represent an opportunity to influence system change and extend the reach of IDF and its partners. Over the past several months, IDF has received applications to become IDF Centres of Education from organizations around the world. In order to select those which are best positioned to take a leadership role in the development of diabetes educational opportunities and capacity-building in their region, these aspiring organizations will undergo a rigorous

process of assessment and review. The successful applicants will have links with an academic and clinical facility, and be able to demonstrate a history of providing good-quality evidenced-based education.

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Access to education

Making diabetes-related educational opportunities accessible to healthcare providers is essential to ensure

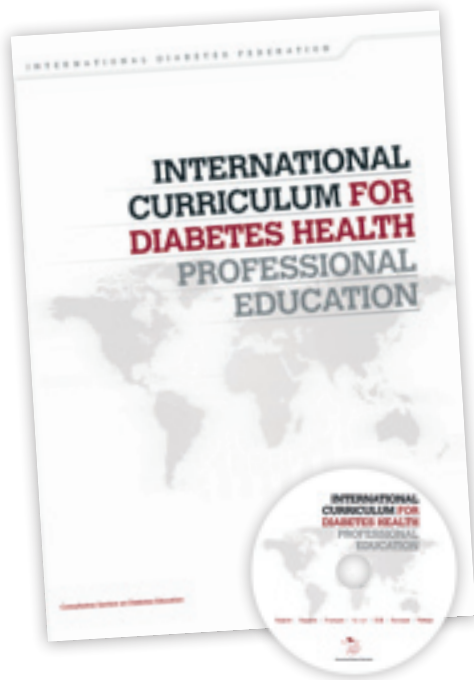
the availability of adequately trained professionals in sufficient numbers to respond to the current and growing demand. An official IDF Recognition Programme will enable organizations to submit their programmes for review by an external panel, and achieve recognition for having met international standards, established by IDF, for diabetes education. Successful candidates will be permitted to use the IDF logo on their teaching and learning materials. This recognition will provide a benchmark of quality for organizations as they develop their programmes, and the logo, as a clearly visible symbol of excellence, will assist healthcare providers seeking a recognized educational programme.

Education for healthcare providers

IDF offers further educational opportunities for healthcare professionals in the form of Multidisciplinary Education Programmes. These Programmes, which are held on request throughout the IDF Regions, aim to increase the accessibility of education for healthcare providers worldwide.

Tools for educational development

The development of tools to support the advancement of education for physicians, other healthcare providers and people with diabetes represents another key area of activity within IDF's education strategy.



International Curriculum and Modules

A comprehensive guide for the development of educational programmes, IDF's recently launched second edition of the International Curriculum for Diabetes Health Professional

Education, is currently available in seven languages. (Visit www.idf.org to download the complete document free of charge.) Complementary, practical teaching material is available in the accompanying Education Modules. These include more than 800 slides – in English, Spanish and Portuguese – with detailed speaker notes and video streaming of presentations by recognized diabetes specialists from around the world. (These modules are also available on the IDF website.)

International Standards and Conversation Maps

The International Standards for Diabetes Education is a point of reference for the design of high-quality educational programming aimed at people affected by diabetes. This document is currently under revision; a second edition will be released in 2009.

IDF recently established partnerships with two private-sector organizations (Eli Lilly and Company and Healthy Interactions) to develop culturally appropriate interactive learning tools, known as Conversation Maps, for use in group sessions of people affected by diabetes. Educators will be trained in the application of these tools to engage people with diabetes in an informative conversation about their condition. The Conversation Maps are being translated into 25 languages and will be distributed in 40 countries.

Our pledge to meet the challenge

The Federation's achievements to date in the field of diabetes education are testimony to our commitment to

improving the health and well-being of people with diabetes worldwide. Our mission in terms of education is to advance multidisciplinary evidenced-based diabetes education and management. We are steadfast in the belief that in meeting this obligation, we will contribute to a reduction in the existing disparities in access to education and management, the very cornerstones of effective diabetes care.

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References

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- 2 International Diabetes Federation-Europe, Federation of European Nurses in Diabetes. *Diabetes the Policy Puzzle: Towards Benchmarking in the EU 25*. IDF-Europe/FEND. Brussels/London, 2008: 5.