



## Ensuring education for people with diabetes

DR MD RAJIB HOSSAIN

Every 10 seconds a person dies from diabetes-related causes and at the same time, two people develop diabetes. Diabetes affects 246 million people worldwide. Each year another 7 million people develop diabetes. These statistics are scary and indicate that diabetes is growing faster than most people imagine.

Experts warn that if we fail to stop or slow the trend, diabetes will affect some 380 million by 2025. They recommend — promoting education, changing diet habits, increasing level of physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight can make a significant progress in the fight against the silent epidemic diabetes.

World Diabetes Day is being observed today with various programmes. In 2009 and for next four years, the theme of the day is "Diabetes education and prevention". The campaign slogan for 2009 is "Understand Diabetes and Take Control". It promotes the importance of structured diabetes education programmes as key to prevention and control of diabetes and advocates for increased opportunities for diabetes education within healthcare systems and communities.

The world is experiencing

an epidemic of diabetes that threatens to overwhelm healthcare systems. It imposes life-long demands on people with diabetes, requiring them to make multiple decisions related to managing their 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 be required 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 high-quality diabetes education that is tailored to their needs and delivered by skilled health professionals.

Without diabetes education, people with diabetes are less prepared to take informed decisions, make behavioural changes, address the psycho-social issues presented by diabetes and ultimately, may be ill-equipped to manage their diabetes effectively.

Poor management will result in reduced health outcomes and an increased likelihood of developing complications. Education is therefore of the utmost importance in the prevention



of diabetes complications and central to the World Diabetes Day campaign.

Ironically, diabetes education is lacking in Bangladesh. Many people with diabetes cannot access diabetes education in Bangladesh due to various factors like cost, distance, the lack of appropriate services etc. Many more may be unaware of the services that do exist. Perhaps they are not convinced of the benefits that diabetes education could bring. They may feel, for example, that interactions with their physicians provide all the education

they need.

Diabetes not only imposes health effects, but also it has been an economic burden for Bangladesh. For example, the health expenditure for diabetes was USD 73,321 in 2007 and is expected to increase at USD 122,269 in 2025, according to International Diabetes Federation.

The mean health expenditure per person with diabetes is about USD 19. Maximum of this expenditure is spent only for lowering blood sugar. But prevention of diabetes and its complications, diabetes education

are grossly neglected. Promotion of this could be a significant step in reducing the disease burden as well as economic burden.

The costly and fatal effects of diabetes arise largely from its complications, especially heart diseases, stroke, amputation, kidney failure and so on. These can be prevented or long-delayed by education, inexpensive pills to control blood sugar, blood pressure, and bad cholesterol — by low-dose aspirin to reduce heart disease risk by 20-25 percent; by stopping smoking and by adopting a healthy diet and exercise.

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The most effective way to prevent diabetes is by losing weight and getting regular exercise.

In 2006, the World Bank systematically assessed the cost-effectiveness and feasibility of diabetes interventions in developing countries. They identified four life saving and inexpensive treatments that would actually save money for everyone. They are simple, minimal control of high blood sugar and high blood pressure, foot care in people at high risk of ulcers, and pre-conception care for women with diabetes. These diabetes treatments are not only inexpensive and cost-saving, they are straightforward to distribute and easy for patients to take.

There is an important role for the diabetes educator to help people understand the risks and set realistic goals to improve health in control, prevention of diabetes and its complication. IDF recommends a goal of at least 30 minutes of daily exercise, such as brisk walking, swimming, cycling or dancing. Taking low carbohydrate diet and regular walking for at least 30 minutes per day, for example, has been shown to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes by 35-40 percent.



## Changing diabetes in children

A great initiative to manage type 1 diabetes in children of Bangladesh

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Novo Nordisk, a leading pharmaceutical company in diabetic care has extended their worldwide programme of free insulin and diabetes care for the children in Bangladesh.

The project includes setting up of three dedicated paediatric diabetes clinics for diagnosis and treatment of children with type-1 diabetes. In addition to basic diabetes care and free insulin, the clinics will also provide patient education, registration and training for healthcare professionals.

In partnership with LifeScan Inc., the project will provide blood glucose monitoring supplies (glucometers and strips) to children enrolled in the programme. JMI Banla Co. will support with their insulin syringe.

"Currently, children with diabetes are managed primarily by adult diabetes clinics or general medical outpatient clinics, but treating diabetes of children is not the same as treating diabetes of adults," says Professor Azad Khan, president of Diabetic Association of Bangladesh.

Parents of children with type-1 diabetes are requested to enrol their children's name to get the services that will deliver under this project. The official registry will open very soon at BIRDEM Hospital. Until then, parents can register their children's name in Novo Nordisk Pharma Pvt Ltd. @ Tel No: +880 2 9893701.

diabetes in Bangladesh. Most of these children will be from poor socio-economic background and their families can not afford to pay for their diabetes care and insulin.

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### MANAGING YOUR EMOTIONS

## Suggestions to help understand and express your feelings

Understanding and controlling your emotions is as important as managing your physical health.

Here are suggestions from the American Academy of Family Physicians that may help:

- Express your feelings, but do it in an appropriate way. Don't keep your emotions bottled up. Talk to a close friend or relative if something is bothering you.

- Don't ignore your emotions. If talking with a close friend or relative does not work, seek professional help.

- Prepare before you act out emotionally. Don't simply lash out in anger, frustration or sadness, or you may regret what you say.

- Achieve a healthy balance of work, play and relaxation, remembering to look for the positive in all situations.

- Since your physical health affects you emotionally, eat a healthy diet, avoid drugs and alcohol, and get frequent exercise.



## Prevent hypothyroidism and its consequences during pregnancy

Hypothyroidism is a disease caused by insufficient production of thyroid hormone secreted from thyroid gland (an endocrine gland in the neck; also known as Adam's apple in men). It is particularly common in women of child bearing age. It is estimated that 2.5% of all pregnant women have some degree of hypothyroidism that may complicate the pregnancy and affect the baby.

For years, physicians have known a link between mothers with hypothyroidism during pregnancy and developmental delay in their children after birth. This was particularly seen in mothers who came from iodine deficient areas. Iodine is necessary to produce thyroid hormone and is now a common component of the salt in our foods. It was also observed in mothers with autoimmune thyroid disease, such as Hashimoto's Thyroiditis.

In some conditions like iodine deficiency, genetic defect, the thyroid may be inhibited, damaged or destroyed and little thyroid hormone is produced. As a result of decreased production by the thyroid gland, patients often notice fatigue, lethargy and weight gain. Constipation is common and many patients with hypothyroidism report feeling excessively cold.



### Uncontrolled hypothyroidism in pregnant women can have long-term effects on the children of these mothers.

However, treatment for both baby with hypothyroidism and the pregnant mother is available in the country. The goal of hypothyroidism in pregnancy is to maintain a thyroid hormone level within high normal range. Pregnant women as well as their newborn babies should be screened for the disease and should seek adequate treatment without any undue prolongation. Here are some of experts' advice that need to be focused to prevent and detect the disease at early stage:

All pregnant women with a goiter (enlarged thyroid gland), high blood levels of thyroid antibodies, a family history of thyroid disease, or

screening of thyroid disease.

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The write-up is compiled by Dr Shahjahan Selim, Shaheed Suhrawardi Medical College Hospital, Dhaka.

symptoms of hypothyroidism should be tested for hypothyroidism.

In women who have borderline or sub-clinical hypothyroidism (for example, not in the laboratory range for true hypothyroidism, but within the low normal range) and who also have positive antibodies (which may indicate an ongoing autoimmune thyroid destruction), therapy with low dose thyroid hormone at the onset of pregnancy may be beneficial.

Women who are on thyroid hormone replacement before pregnancy should also be tested to make certain that their levels are appropriate.

Dosing is dynamic during pregnancy and should be closely monitored by regular blood testing. As the pregnancy progresses, many women require higher doses of hormone replacement. However, the management of each woman's situation is considered individually after consultation with her physician. We all have to make sure that no woman with hypothyroidism is left untreated before conception.

The benefits of treatment extend not only to pregnant women with hypothyroidism, but also to their children.

## Care for children with intellectual disability



DR ZILLUR RAHMAN KHAN

Intellectual disability is a condition, in which there is delay or deficiency in all aspects of development. This is the commonest form of developmental disability which manifests at early childhood, usually before the age of 18 years and it is a life long condition.

It is usually ascertained by Intelligence Quotient (IQ) assessment and assessment of adaptive functioning and behaviour in respect of areas such as communication, self care, home living, social or interpersonal skills, use of community resources, self direction, functional academic skills, work, leisure, health and safety.

Intellectual disability is a condition of multifactorial origin. Combination of genetic and environmental factors like specific genetic syndromes, lower socio-economic class, malnutrition, poor living conditions are important risk factors. Besides, birth complications like birth injury, hypothyroidism (lack of thyroid hormone), infection, trauma and toxicity are the factors which are very relevant to the socio-cultural context in Bangladesh.

Children with intellectual disability usually face a lot of familial and social discrimination, negligence and humiliation. Surprisingly, the problem starts from his/her family. The parents and family members are ashamed of them and try to hide them from social gatherings. Very often they are placed in an inhuman condition, lack proper nutrition and fail to meet the basic demands of life.

The discriminations towards them are immense, especially to the female children. Occasionally, female children are sexually abused by their relatives and

outsiders. Sometimes, criminals provoke and use them in different sorts of delinquent and subversive activities like stealing, arson and other destructive activities.

Early detection and interventions are vital to prevent intellectual disability among children and to enhance maximum functional outcome. It is established from national and international studies that birth complications are important risk factors for developing intellectual disabilities. So, healthcare services to detect and prevent this should be incorporated in the reproductive healthcare package, maternal and child healthcare (MCH) and emergency obstetric care (EOC) services.

The basic life skill training from the family level is to be applied so that they can achieve the skill such as eating, dressing, bathing, toilet training and other personal care gradually. All the family members should share the responsibilities rather than overburden a single individual, especially the mother. It will promote congenital environment for the children within the family and enhances family bondage.

The concerted efforts of person concerned such as psychiatrists, psychologists, paediatricians, occupational therapists, social workers, speech therapist, physiotherapists, counsellor, volunteers, policymakers and other persons working in government and NGO level are needed for the best interest of the children with intellectual disability.

We have to work together to build up a better future for the children with intellectual disability so that they could lead socially and economically productive life with dignity and justice in the society.

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## First aid: Controlling a nosebleed

If you get a nosebleed, do not panic. Many nosebleeds look worse than they really are. Here are the experts' advice on steps to help stop a nosebleed:

- Sit down, and tilt your body forward slightly. Keep your head positioned above your heart, but allow the blood to drain from your nose, not down your throat.

- Use your thumb and index finger and gently apply pressure near the end of the nose, at the soft part.

- Hold your fingers in that position for at least five minutes, then check if the bleeding has stopped.

- If the nose is still bleeding, hold it for at least 10 minutes more without releasing.

- Place an ice pack or cold compress across your nose.

- Leave the nose alone once it stops bleeding, and don't blow your nose or bend over.

## Free health checkup, workshop at JBFH

STAR HEALTH REPORT

To mark world diabetes day, Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital (JBFH) has arranged a health checkup workshop on diabetes today at their hospital premise, says a press release.

Diabetologists and other specialist doctors will screen people for diabetes and related complications. They will deliver treatment at free of cost from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., whereas

they will also serve people with free laboratory tests to detect diabetes and ECG.

In order to provide education and vital information on diabetes, they organise the workshop for the patients and other concerned people as a part of their corporate social responsibility.

Interested people and organisations are requested to correspond with Mr Alam, Corporate Manager @ 01717760300.

## New website with basic information on diabetes

In order to join the fight against diabetes, a new website [www.hoop4diabetes.com](http://www.hoop4diabetes.com) has been launched on the occasion of World Diabetes Day containing all the basic information about diabetes, says a press release.

Aside from building awareness, this campaign hopes to use the blue circle as a focal point to bring together those affected to exchange experiences to help them live with their diabetes or that of their loved ones.

