

The Importance of Education in Diabetes Care

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Diabetes is a condition that cannot be cured but can be controlled. It has been shown that people with controlled diabetes are less liable to develop the complications of the disease. Education is important because one cannot have good control without education in the management of diabetes.

There is a high prevalence of diabetes in Malta. 10% of the Maltese population over the age of 18 years suffer from this condition. Unfortunately, in spite of all the efforts done to promote education, there still exists a lack of awareness among the diabetics and the general public.

As the Deputy Nursing Officer in charge at the Diabetes Clinic and as a member on the Council of the Maltese Diabetes Association, I consider education as a priority in the treatment of diabetes. Controlling diabetes means keeping the blood sugar level as close to normal as possible.

It is very important that a diabetic keeps himself/herself well informed about his/her condition. Here are some ways how such information could be obtained.

- Education programs are held monthly at the Diabetes Clinic outpatients Department, at St. Luke's Hospital. All newly diagnosed diabetics are invited to attend. Those who have never attended such lectures can contact the reception desk at the Diabetes Clinic, and will be invited to attend these sessions.
- 2. Monthly lectures on diabetes are held at the Malta Diabetes Association in Valletta for members of the Association.

The Maltese Diabetes Association was set up in January 1981 with the aim of setting up a support group for those suffering from diabetes.

The Association has a current

membership of 900 persons. In spite of the high incidence of diabetes in Malta the response on the part of the public is very low. This may be due to the fact that those affected by this condition do not appreciate the possible long-term effects of diabetes. The Maltese Diabetes Association is a member of the International Diabetes Federation, with whom we exchange ideas and up to date information on new methods and technologies to fight and control the condition. Committee members, including lay members, attend conferences abroad where they are able to compare and contrast the local situation with those of other countries with a view to improving the conditions of people suffering from diabetes.

The Association publishes a magazine (*Id-Dijabete U Saħħtek*) once every four months wherein local specialists and other health care personnel write articles on matters of interest to those suffering from diabetes. A monthly meeting is held for all the members of the Association and the general public. Specialists in various fields related to diabetes are invited to deliver talks on a specific topic, such as, home monitoring care of the feet.

The Juvenile Support group has recently been revived to cater for the needs of young people with diabetes. Parents and their diabetic children are urged to attend to discuss their problems and learn how to deal effectively with various situations which may arise.. A summer camp is organised once a year for the diabetic children. The children are given the opportunity to learn how to cope with their condition without the over protectiveness of their parents. Throughout the camp continuous indirect education is given to the children.

The Diabetes Association is a philanthropic organisation run with the help of specialists in the field of diabetes and lay volunteers.

The Association's premises can be found at 111 Melita Street, Valletta. Council members are available for any assistance every Wednesday morning between 9.00 and 11.30 am. Any further information can be obtained by writing to the Association at P.O. Box 414 Valletta or telephone 221518. ✦