Interview with Claudia Duran, General Manager, Mexican Diabetes Federation

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Tags: Mexican Diabetes Federation

Could you give us a brief introduction to the Federacion Mexicana de Diabetes?

The Mexican Diabetes Federation was established in 1988 by a group of people affected by diabetes, as well as families and health professionals interested in tackling this disease in a more effective and preventive way

Nowadays our activities are:

• National Diabetes Congress: the most important event taking place in our country regarding diabetes. Year after year we concentrated one thousand health professionals (general doctors, nurses, dietitians, etc), along with thousands of diabetic patients, families and people thriving to reach a healthier lifestyle.

• Diabetes Educator Diploma Course. On-site and online options. To date, we trained more than 600 diabetes educators.

• Diabetes Hoy (Diabetes Today) magazines for general public and for health professionals

• Website www.fmdiabetes.org, dedicated to offer information, advice and news on several topics related to diabetes in México and in other Spanish speaking countries.

• Diabetes informative materials to support diabetes education through our institution and to help diabetes educators and health professionals.

• Camps for teens and children with diabetes. Each summer, around 6 to 8 camps are held by different Mexican Diabetes Associations. An average of 200 children learn self-care tools and

gather with their peers for 3 to 5 days.
• Also, FMD offers education through its associations in different locations in the country with conferences, workshops, prevention campaigns and psychological advice among other activities.
Diabetes is a leading cause of mortality in Mexico and a major public health issue. In your opinion, is enough being done on prevention by the different stakeholders in the health sector?

The most important health problems must be attended by everyone: government, society, private enterprises, people with diabetes, families, doctors, etc. Yet, our most important initiative is and will always be through education.

People who are aware of their diabetic condition are more capable to understand and deal with their conditions rather than the ones who do not take this disease seriously. Health professionals have an important role to play when spreading the information to the audience, and the government must increase the access to health services.

The relation to food is something very cultural, and closely linked to family and social events. Which actions do you have in place to change these cultural habits?

It´s very hard to change the cultural habits, and as a country it is key not to lose our cultural identity. Family and social events are common in our culture, and that will not change. Therefore, education is a main prevention factor for diabetes and obesity. The challenge remaining is to teach people how to eat any type of food in a balanced and appropriate way. As always education remains the most important tool.

Are you satisfied with the level of coverage of diabetes by the different health institutions such as IMSS, and Seguro Popular? What could be improved?

For every 100 pesos spent on diabetes in Mexico: 52 pesos are spent by the patient and their families. The other 48 pesos are spent by national health institutions. So not all of the patient needs are covered by the institutions. Sometimes, you also have a shortage of medicines.

One way to improve this situation is by funding these institutions in a fair and balanced manner. Treating diseases represent a very high cost, and given the frequency of complications from diabetes, it is very important to implement prevention programs. Regular interventions should be implemented to help the population at risk to become aware of the seriousness of the disease.

To treat chronic diseases, pills are not enough: it involves an adherence to a different lifestyle, raising the awareness of the families, constant monitoring, among many other things. Therefore, the quality of service offered by the pharmaceutical lab or the medical device company is

absolutely crucial. How do you assess the quality of service offered to the patients by the industry? What could be improved?

The industry is always at the forefront of treatments and devices to control diabetes and is responsible for generating the principal asset associated with health and quality of life, which is the drug or the specialized device.

Another way the industry could improve the patient's lives would be to increase the degree of specialization in education through higher knowledge and awareness about the risks of diabetes. This may be done for both health professionals and diabetic people.

Diabetes is an extremely complex disease, and diabetic patients are "a ticking bomb" in the words of one of our interviewees – with complications such as diabetic retinopathy, kidney failure, heart diseases. Have you seen a coordinated effort from all industry players? How could this be coordinated?

It is very important for us to work hand in hand with the health industry. Our priority is to educate patients with diabetes to enhance their quality of life. By combining our efforts and maintaining that common goal we are capable of providing the resources and the most comprehensive tools to improve their lives.

Individuals must be empowered, and have the ability to take decisions concerning their health. Self-control is a must and patient education programs must be adapted so that everyone can understand them.

The projection figures for diabetes prevalence in Mexico in the coming 10 to 15 years are appalling – and worrying for the sustainability of the healthcare system. Do you believe it is possible to bend the curve?

I believe diabetes can be reduced drastically, yet a tough road remains ahead. As long as we achieve to raise awareness among the population and create a real preventive culture, most of the work will be done. Our purpose is to make people aware that diabetes is a condition that can be easily prevented by changing some daily habits. When that happens, the incidence of diabetes in our country will fall.

Could you develop on the specific actions undertaken by the Federacion Mexicana de Diabetes during the Diabetes Day?

The 13 Mexican Diabetes Associations who belong to the Mexican Diabetes Federation will carry out more than 9,000 blood glucose measures in different cities. These Associations will prepare walks throughout the cities as well as events to increase the awareness around diabetes prevention and its complications.

In Mexico City the Mexican Diabetes Federation will organize a blue circle around the Angel de la Independencia (Independence Angel) with more than one thousand persons.

Do you have a final message for our readers?

I wish to remind the audience that diabetes is a chronic disease that so far has no valid cure. However, this disease is preventable in half of the cases and this must not be neglected. Prevention is a very useful tool to avoid patients from suffering their wholes lives and having disabilities. When the audience will understand that changing eating habits, performing exercise, and getting regular checkups are vital – Mexicans will have better lives and our healthcare system will prosper.

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