

Key Messages and Facts from the “Unite for Diabetes” Campaign, 2006 Led by the International Diabetes Federation

Key message 1:

Diabetes is a silent killer and maimer

- Every 10 seconds a person dies from diabetes-related causes. This death rate is predicted to rise by 25% over the next decade
- Diabetes is one of the major causes of premature death worldwide - 3.5 million deaths are attributable to diabetes each year, yet the disease goes largely ignored.
- Diabetes kills as many people each year as HIV / AIDS.
- Diabetes is a global problem - It is one of the leading causes of death in most developed countries and increasingly affecting the developing world.
- There is no such thing as “mild” diabetes - Diabetes is a leading cause of heart attack, stroke, blindness, amputation and kidney failure.

Key message 2:

Diabetes is rising dramatically worldwide – It has been recognised as an epidemic

- Two people are diagnosed every 10 seconds
- From 1985 when just 30 million people had diabetes, its prevalence has increased six fold so that more than 230 million people worldwide are now affected by diabetes. This number will increase to more than 350 million within the next 20 years. Thus, more people will have diabetes in 2025 than the current populations of the United States, Canada and Australia combined. Without effective prevention and control programmes, the incidence of diabetes is likely to continue rising globally.
- Type 1 diabetes is growing by 3% per year. It is increasing fastest among very young children.
- The diabetes pandemic, which consists primarily of type 2 diabetes (90-95% of cases), has evolved in association with rapid cultural changes, aging populations, increasing urbanisation, dietary changes, decreased physical activity and other unhealthy lifestyles and behaviours. Although most people with type 2 diabetes in developing countries are between the ages of 35 and 64, more and more children are developing type 2 diabetes.

Key message 3:

Diabetes hits the vulnerable hard, especially in the developing countries

- Diabetes is not just a disease of the developed world. Within 20 years, 80% of all people with diabetes will be in countries currently considered developing and seven of the top 10 countries with diabetes are developing countries. The developing world, which is often associated with hunger and inadequate nutrition for children, is now experiencing an epidemic of type 2 diabetes, a disease usually associated with wealth and a lifestyle (“deathstyle”) of excess. This results from the high degree of urbanisation in some countries like e.g. India that have made people adopt western lifestyles. In addition, some people genetically have a higher risk of developing diabetes. This combined with great changes in lifestyle has expressed this risk as the reality of diabetes.

- Many indigenous communities are genetically predisposed to diabetes but have low or no access to appropriate diabetes care. If we do not act now, diabetes will decimate entire communities.
- Access to appropriate medication and care should be a right not a privilege. Yet, appropriate medical management and insulin and diabetes supplies are not yet universally accessible to all those who need them in many countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. In developing countries, up to 80% of people must pay for their healthcare out of their own pockets. Many must then choose between their health and feeding and clothing their family. Thus, a person in Zambia who requires insulin for survival has a life expectancy of 11 years, a person in Mali can expect to live for 30 months and in Mozambique, a person with type 1 diabetes will die within a year of diagnosis. People die because they cannot afford the medication they need. People with type 1 diabetes need insulin to survive No child should die from diabetes

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Key message 4:

Diabetes will undermine economies worldwide

- Diabetes is increasingly affecting the economically active. In developing countries, those most affected by diabetes are between 35 and 64 – an age group that is economically active.
- Diabetes costs more than money. The burden of diabetes on individuals and their families are not only financial, the pain, anxiety and reduced quality of life also have a devastating impact. Diabetes hits the poorest hardest.

Key message 5:

Diabetes can be controlled and in many cases prevented

- Diabetes is not just a health issue. It is a whole-of-government issue. Changes to the way that people can live are required to stop the obesity and diabetes epidemics. To take on the challenge will require the concerted efforts of governments, civil society and the private sector.
- Over 50% of type 2 diabetes can be prevented. Preventative care does not need to involve costly treatment or medication – changes to diet, increasing physical activity and improving the living environment can do the trick. Therefore, people need a choice of lifestyle. Personal education must be supported by changes to the broader environment, such as transportation, urban design, advertising and food pricing.
- Diabetes is manageable with appropriate care and education. It is important to help people with diabetes acquire knowledge and skills to manage their condition.
- There is an urgent need for concerted action. The recent UN Resolution on diabetes is an essential and important starting point, but it cannot end with talk!
- There is a need to increase awareness about diabetes, its complications and prevention, particularly among health policy makers in low and middle-income countries and communities.
- There is a need to diagnose diabetes early and take the necessary steps to prevent or delay diabetes complications. 50% of people with diabetes do not know they have it.

Adapted from the '**Unite for Diabetes**' campaign **Media relations guidelines (2006)**