

DIABETES AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL: LESSONS FROM DENMARK

by Dennis Oh

Novo Nordisk, a global leader in diabetes care, insulin production, and insulin delivery devices, is putting a new face to diabetes care, which one might call an “integrated approach.” At their Steno Health Promotion Centre, two initiatives are underway to take diabetes care to the next level.

1 First is in the area of patient education.

It appears that physicians in general do not view diabetes seriously enough to improve their usual patient education procedure. Given the facts about diabetes and its connection to many other factors, researchers at Steno are challenging the paradigm of the top-down monologue that merely centres on the problem and the solution and are proposing a more “democratic” approach of patient-centered, participatory education.

As coaches working with participants, physicians should come alongside patients and help them balance their complex condition and its effects on their lives socially and psychologically.

2 A second notable initiative involves community-level diabetes prevention. At a Danish town called Bornholm, Steno researchers are bringing diabetes prevention into schools, day care institutions, the media, and even into supermarkets.

Spheres of influence, ranging from teachers, advertisements, and the re-organisation of food products in a grocery store are working in tandem to send the urgent message of diabetes prevention to the consumer.

This project involves some 220 families and the cooperation of municipal leaders and businesses with the main aim being local ownership by the community.



DIABETES IN A CONNECTED AGE

Diabetes is a highly “connected” condition. On the physiological level, it is a problem involving many chemicals, organs, and systems. Psychologically, it affects emotions and feelings of self-worth, pride, and hope. Socially, it alters our relationships and aspirations. Globally, it is one of the greatest health and economic threats in society.

As our generation also becomes increasingly connected with each other and our environments, new challenges and opportunities face us in how we deal with diabetes.

At the end of the day, it is the individual struggling with diabetes, or the at-risk, pre-diabetic with high blood glucose that will face the challenge of

controlling his or her incurable condition in this ever-changing world.

Even so, connectivity with one’s environment and social network will have a profound effect on how diabetes is managed.

The main path to increased connectivity is communication. Does everyone around you know about your condition? Tell them! There’s nothing to be ashamed about, and their understanding of your daily needs and routine may become very helpful, or even save your life, one day.

Unveil the condition which has been hidden behind closed doors and let people understand, remind, and support you with your dietary restrictions, medications, and exercise routine. You are not alone in the fight against diabetes.



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