

Consensus Development Conference Stories

Building consensus on self-monitoring in diabetes

When 100% of responders indicated they like something, one quickly realizes that they must have *really* liked that 'something'. That was the percentage of those who attended Canada's first ever consensus development conference on self-monitoring in diabetes who rated the conference as excellent or good.



Opened by former provincial health minister Iris Evans, and moderated by IHE Fellow Jeff Johnson, the 2006 Edmonton conference attracted more than 150 delegates from across the country to discuss whether people with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes need to test their blood sugar on a daily basis.

The purpose of a consensus conference is to evaluate scientific information on a particular health issue being considered.

The panel of experts chaired by Michael Decter came to the following conclusion after two days of presentations:

- By the year 2010, three million Canadians will be living with diabetes. Self-monitoring, properly utilized and properly funded, is one of the tools that will assist people living with diabetes.

The panel also concluded that:

- All people with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes on insulin or secretagogues should be covered in each jurisdiction for self monitoring supplies on the same basis as medically necessary drugs
- Educators and health-care providers should be encouraged to partner with patients to ensure that monitoring results are regularly used to optimize care
- Insurance plans providing coverage for self-monitoring should review program criteria to ensure value for money

As one of the first consensus development conferences held in Canada, media interest and attention was high. Stories were presented in the local Edmonton media as well as nationally by CBC Television and Canadian Press.

Managing diabetes a daily challenge

When Peter McDougall was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes in 2003, he was 42 and had just finished running his first marathon.

Since then, he says daily life hasn't changed tremendously. "What has changed is my outlook," says the Associate Vice-President of Human Resources at the



University of New Brunswick in Fredericton. “It’s not just a matter of pulling on my running shoes and going for a run before breakfast. Now it’s a matter of making sure that I test my blood, and know when I last had carbohydrates, and do I have what I need to be safe?”

McDougall’s 15-year-old son, Chris, was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at age 9, and McDougall’s brother, now a police officer, was diagnosed with Type 1 at 19.

Despite the family history, McDougall says his son’s diagnosis came as a huge shock. “One day you wouldn’t even let your kid walk around carrying a knife or scissors and the next day you are watching him inject a hypodermic needle multiple times a day.”

As Vice-Chair of the National Advocacy Council, Canadian Diabetes Association, McDougall is passionate about trying to ease the financial burden associated with diabetes. McDougall’s employee benefits plan covers his costs of nearly \$2,000 a year for diabetes, and his son’s costs of \$5,000 to \$6,000. But not all Canadians are so fortunate.

“Nobody in Canada should suffer the inability to manage diabetes because of lack of financial resources,” says McDougall. He also strongly advocates for research and for more awareness of diabetes in school systems.

McDougall provided a patient’s and parent’s perspective at the recent IHE Consensus Development Conference on Self-Monitoring in Diabetes in Edmonton.

Assessing self-monitoring a step in the right direction

Dr. Randy Gregg is no stranger to the challenge of diabetes management.

“In sports medicine you see a lot of athletic people who suffer from the effect of diabetes,” said the former Edmonton Oilers’ defenseman and five-time Stanley Cup winner. An orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Gregg has a successful sports medicine practice in Edmonton.

He also has personal experience with diabetes. Dr. Gregg’s older brother, also a doctor, has Type 2 diabetes.

The popular former Edmonton Oiler player, who successfully juggled his hockey passion with medical training, participated in the expert panel tasked with developing a consensus statement on self-monitoring in diabetes.



Dr. Gregg found the three-day conference well organized and intriguing. “We are starting to see research suggesting that self-monitoring might not give the best return.” He noted that glucose control is only “one part of the puzzle” surrounding management of diabetes, and that the role of obesity and exercise must also receive attention.

An 'expert' view of consensus development

Pamela Wallin, former Consul, New York, says her only expertise in diabetes stems from having two nieces with Type 1 diabetes, and “good old journalistic know-how.” She participated along with Dr. Gregg in the expert panel that heard evidence on the pros and cons of self-testing.

Wallin, also one of Canada’s most respected broadcasters and journalists, praised the format of the conference, the first of its type in Alberta. “I think this is a very interesting idea,” she said. “It allows for a really in-depth examination of an issue.” She was particularly impressed that perspectives of the scientific community and of patients and families were considered.



Wallin said her two nieces, both diagnosed with Type 1 at a young age, demonstrate contrasting behaviours to self-monitoring. One tests herself rigorously, four or five times a day, while the other does so only occasionally. “It’s allowed me to experience two very different sets of behaviour.”