

DESSA: Moving forward!



Herbert Spencer said: "The great aim of education is not knowledge, but action".

Walking, coach, FIT. What do they have in common?

Last year, DESSA held its first conference in Durban. There is no question that this was an exciting event on our calendar, and no doubt that it was successful as well! More than 188 delegates attended from all parts of South Africa, including visitors from overseas. "Walking with diabetes" was the theme, and this exciting event ended with the introduction of the "wheel". Yes, we had a wonderful workshop, where everyone was introduced to an extraordinary helpful tool called the InsuCalc Insuling Dosing Wheel®. This nifty little tool helps a patient to calculate how much bolus insulin to use according to his current blood glucose and meal size. It takes into consideration the patient's personal insulin:carbohydrate ratio and insulin sensitivity. So, in one weekend: from walking to the wheel.

The exciting road of pursuing coaching skills for diabetes educators began after the conference. Roche has kindly sponsored a project whereby diabetes educators will learn to perform life-coaching skills with their patients. There will be regular workshops all over the country. The role of diabetes educators has progressed significantly from basic instruction on self-care (on which the profession was established), to now include a variety of key responsibilities within diabetes care. The days of telling a patient what to do are long gone. We as educators, have to negotiate with patients about what each is prepared to do. Coaching involves negotiation and commitment to a successful end goal. It is a contract between the educator and the patient. Good coaching skills by the educator are required to motivate patients and persuade them to commit.

Are we FIT for this?

Yes, four members of the DESSA National Executive Committee (NEC) were involved in establishing guidelines for safe and effective injection technique within the South African setting.

The Forum for Injection Technique (FIT) South Africa is part of a global effort. In 2013, an international meeting which was held in the UK. Current local and global FIT teams were in attendance. Laurie van der Merwe and Hester Davel from DESSA attended this meeting on how to

achieve best practice with regard to injection technique, and to introduce this to more countries.

What is the relevance of injection technique, you might ask?

The consequences of using an incorrect injection technique are important in all aspects of diabetes care because many healthcare professionals do not always link it to erratic blood glucose control. Guidelines that help healthcare funders to decide how many needles to allocate to a patient, for example, are also important: "FIT is committed to supporting the implementation of its recommendations for those involved in diabetes care, including practice nurses, and recognises the need to develop and make accessible new and innovative educational approaches".

Can we improve on our movements going forward?

Always! There is enormous cultural diversity in a country that has 11 national languages. What a challenge for educators! The DESSA workshop at the SEMDSA Conference promises to meet this challenge using an exciting theme: improving our coaching skills by embracing the cultural diversity of our patients and fully appreciating their differing needs.

In this day and age of evidence-based practice, educators seek to provide interventions that are known to make a significant difference in the lives of our patients. For this, we need to keep moving forward.

On this note, I'd like to thank my NEC for its invaluable support throughout the last four years that I have been chairperson of DESSA. I want to thank all my valued colleagues in the diabetes field for the interaction and exciting times that we shared together. It has been a gift to work with you. A personal "thank you" to the pharmaceutical companies who are always supporting us!

I wish our new chairperson all of the best. Enjoy the ride and keep moving forward.

"The crowning fortune of a man is to be born to some pursuit which finds him employment and happiness, whether it be to make baskets, or broadswords, or canals, or statues or songs." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

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