

# World Diabetes Congress – Cape Town 2006



The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) is a global non-governmental organisation with more than 190 member associations in over 140 countries. Consequently it represents millions of people with diabetes, their families and others who care for them. The IDF mission is to 'promote diabetes care, prevention and a cure worldwide'. As such it acts as an advocate for people with diabetes and their health care providers.

The IDF holds an international congress in a different location every 3 years. The last congresses have taken place in Mexico (Mexico City), Finland (Helsinki) and most recently France (Paris, with about 15 000 participants) in 2003. The African regional and South African local diabetes community, the latter represented by the Society for Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes of South Africa (SEMDSA) and Diabetes South Africa (DSA), were both honoured and delighted by the IDF's decision that the 19th World Diabetes Congress would take place in Cape Town, South Africa, from 3 to 7 December 2006. It is perhaps important to reflect that the last IDF congress on the African continent took place in Nairobi in 1982.

The provisional programme was recently announced after input from all the IDF regions. The wide-ranging programme promises to provide local participants with a unique opportunity to hear the latest cutting-edge diabetes research. The overall programme incorporates the following seven streams: Basic Science, Clinical Advances, Education and Care, Health Care Organisation, Epidemiology and Public Health, Living with Diabetes, and Diabetes in Africa. Each stream includes state of the art lectures, symposia and free communications, primarily in the form of poster presentations as is the norm at international meetings such as this. Daily small-group sessions, previously known as 'Meet the professor sessions', will provide participants with the opportunity to interact with experts on specific topics as well as to share their own experiences and information.

Unique to WDC 2006 is the Africa stream – a new venture by the IDF designed to focus on the region hosting the congress in order to highlight specific issues relating to diabetes in that region. The composition of the Africa stream to date includes a hallmark symposium on the impact of infectious diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, on diabetes in Africa. Our intention is to invite regional and provincial

ministers of health, directors of health and World Health Organization representatives to participate in a special symposium at which sub-Saharan IDF initiatives, namely the Africa Diabetes Declaration, the type 2 clinical practice guidelines and the diabetes education training manual, will be presented for discussion and adoption.

The relevance of understanding different cultural traditions and beliefs in diabetes health care delivery and the role of traditional healers will be discussed. Furthermore, while in general few problems are encountered in accessing insulin in South Africa, this is certainly not the case in all parts of the region. This stream intends to examine issues relating to insulin delivery and access, hopefully providing some answers. Another topical issue to be debated is the pros and cons of animal compared with human insulin. Although we in South Africa have used only human insulin for many years, a surprising number of people with diabetes in industrialised societies refuse to use human insulin as they feel that this reduces their warning symptoms of hypoglycaemia, and many countries in Africa only have access to non-human insulin.

The hosting of the WDC in Africa will provide an ideal opportunity for the IDF and every one of the region's diabetes organisations not only to raise the awareness of diabetes in their countries, but further to press for and influence their health authorities to commit to and deliver improved, fair and equitable care for people with diabetes.

It is gratifying for the congress organisers to have encountered extremely positive support for the WDC from the various levels of government, commerce and industry. It is clearly in the area's interest that this large congress be a resounding success. However, crucial to this success is attendance by as many African and South African health care professionals as possible. This is not just about numbers of participants or the undoubted quality of the science to be presented – it is about all of us involved in the care of people with diabetes grasping the opportunity not only to learn from the rest of the world, but also to showcase our special knowledge and experience to the rest of the world.

**Dinky Levitt**  
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*South African Society for Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes*