

A look 'upstream' to Melbourne

Prioritising diabetes on the global agenda

Linong Ji

The global impact of diabetes in the 21st century has been compared to the after-effects of a tsunami: diabetes threatens the future of many millions and crushes the stability of national health and economic systems. Climate change, globalisation, urbanisation, changing demographics and economic shifts are all part of the bigger global picture in which diabetes plays an increasingly dominant role.

Professor Linong Ji, lead for the Global Challenges in Health Stream, introduces the upcoming Melbourne programme, explaining the obligation of all sectors to prioritise diabetes. Invited experts will examine what we must do to frame diabetes within the larger public health context and secure a healthier future for everyone, irrespective of their geographic location.

The Stream will provide a comprehensive look at the global challenges facing diabetes care and treatment today and ask the big questions relating to diabetes and global health. How can we create national diabetes plans which will be helpful not only to people with diabetes but also to people at risk? What should the role of WHO and other international organisations be in creating these plans? What is the impact of globalisation and urbanisation on diabetes and how can we mitigate their negative effects? Speakers from all over the world will identify what works both locally and globally in terms of combatting the epidemic and what still needs to be done. Our objective should be to foster real change for people with diabetes and those at risk.



Advocating change

IDF in cooperation with the NCD Alliance has been at the forefront of global health advocacy, working to position diabetes and other Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) on the global health agenda and the post-2015 development agenda. In 2012, the World Health Assembly took a crucial step in acknowledging the problem by setting a target to reduce preventable NCD deaths 25% by 2025. Experts in the Global Challenges in Health Stream will consider this target alongside the historic target to ‘halt the rise in diabetes,’ with a constructively critical eye. Are the WHO targets hype or hope? How do we achieve them in low-and middle-income countries?

An ageing society and its accompanying challenges to public health will be another essential focus of the Stream. In 2030, the number of people over 60 will outnumber those under fifteen for

the first time. As the age of populations increase, so does the overall risk for developing type 2 diabetes. The increasing number of co-morbidities in an ageing population also complicates treating diabetes in this population. Stream sessions dedicated to ageing will focus on our health systems and whether or not they are ready to deal with the impact of rapidly changing demographics.

From global to local

Unless we can make an impact on the lives of people with diabetes in the ‘real world,’ discussion and debate on research outcomes will fall short of making a real difference. The Global Challenges in Health Stream will therefore focus a large part of its attention on how we can translate research to real world settings. Unified, we can fight the epidemic on the diabetes battlefield, where the disease continues to claim so many lives in communities and societies.

We hope you will join us for our sessions because this really is about you! I look forward to seeing you in Melbourne and joining together to shape the future of diabetes.



Linong Ji

Linong Ji leads the Global Challenges in Health Stream at the IDF World Diabetes Congress in Melbourne, 2013. He is a Professor of Medicine, Director of the Department of Endocrinology and Metabolism at Peking University People’s Hospital and Co-Director of Diabetes Centre of Peking University. He is the recent President of the Chinese Diabetes Society and a Vice-President of the International Diabetes Federation.