New BCV benefit — the BCV grants

On July 15, the Blue Circle Voices network launched a call for BCV grant applications. The BCV grants were created to help BCV members implement diabetes-related activities in their region/country.

Projects undertaken will help improve the lives of people living with diabetes through one or several of the following aspects: advocacy, awareness-raising, education and prevention.

Applicants had the choice between different types of grants, depending on the project and the activities they are planning to develop.

All BCV members were invited to apply for a grant by August 16. The results of the application process will be announced in a few weeks, and the selected activities will be presented in the following newsletters.
What was your first thought when you were diagnosed with diabetes?

I was diagnosed at 11 years old. I remember seeing my mother crying and talking to my father in secret. I always felt guilty: I thought I had done something wrong and it was my fault my mother was depressed.

Had you ever heard about diabetes before your diagnosis?

As a child, the only thing I had heard about it was that the elderly were more likely of having diabetes.

What is the biggest challenge you have faced since you were diagnosed? How have you overcome it?

To be honest, I accepted my new guest (diabetes) very fast. I have been living with diabetes for 21 years now, and I have never faced any serious challenges. The only thing I can say is that controlling my blood sugar levels and keeping my HbA1c in range is an everyday challenge for me.

Has diabetes had a positive impact in your life?

Absolutely, yes! It has made a superhero girl of me, in a society where women and girls are constantly challenged by many limitations. I never see barriers and obstacles as insurmountable, and I owe this power to my diabetes.

Most importantly, diabetes has allowed me to build priceless friendships. I have many friends, of all ages and all over the country, who also live with diabetes. They are an inseparable part of my diabetes.

What do you think is the biggest diabetes challenge in your country?

People living with diabetes in Iran face many challenges and access to essential care is the first and most important one. The situation is especially critical now: because of insurance issues, people can only access a limited number of insulin pens. I believe every person living with diabetes should have the right to easily access the care and medicines they need, including insulin.

Why did you decide to join the Blue Circle Voices network?

As an ambassador of a very active diabetes NGO (the Gabric Diabetes Education Association), I am in constant contact with children and teenagers with diabetes, and their parents. I know the problems and challenges they face, so I have joined the BCV network to be their voice at the international scale.
What was your first thought when you were diagnosed with diabetes?
I was only four years old when I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, so I do not remember much. The only memory I have is a mix of emotions: fear, confusion and sadness.

Had you ever heard about diabetes before your diagnosis?
My parents already had some knowledge about it, but after the diagnosis they were devastated about the news and afraid that I would die.

What is the biggest challenge you have faced since then? How have you overcome it?
The main challenge was a diabetes burnout after eighteen years of living with it. Besides getting professional aid, I decided I needed to do something to help change my vision of diabetes: I started a blog, which has become one of the biggest diabetes blogs in Poland. You can visit it at bluesugarcube.blogspot.com.

Has diabetes had a positive impact in your life?
Yes! Thanks to my diabetes, I have had the chance to join an amazing community, to make new friends, and to travel the world to participate in many interesting opportunities and events.

It gives me great satisfaction to share my experience, knowledge and skills to help other people living with diabetes.

What do you think is the biggest diabetes challenge in your country?
I believe that the biggest diabetes challenge in Poland is the lack of support for adults living with diabetes. Although reimbursements programmes exist for people with diabetes under 18 or 26, once you turn 26 options are limited and you are practically on your own.

Why did you decide to join the Blue Circle Voices network?
I joined the Blue Circle Voices network because I wanted to be more engaged in global diabetes advocacy efforts, and to help creating a positive change for the diabetes community.
Last March, I was invited by Servier to attend a diabetes program in my capacity as one of the members of the IDF Blue Circle Voices network. The first effort of the morning was directed to assist an upcoming diabetes awareness programme, which needed the input of people with type 2 diabetes. The second was for the attendees, most of whom lived with diabetes, to interact with about 50 diabetologists and endocrinologists from across the world. The goal was for all involved to share challenges and experiences about doctor-patient communication. The objective? To improve relationships between healthcare providers and people with diabetes. Some of the insights included doctors admitting feeling burned out from heavy workloads while people with diabetes felt unheard and judged.

Improving practitioner-patient communication has become a priority in modern healthcare systems today mostly because it improves diabetes clinical outcomes. Previous studies suggest that doctors who score higher on empathy and compassion in patient communication, also score higher on treatment outcomes.

Doctors and people with diabetes were asked to express their concerns regarding the barriers to communication that negatively affect the doctor-patient relationship, and ultimately treatment outcomes.

As a person living with type 2 diabetes and a member of the Blue Circle Voices Network, participating at this forum was a valuable experience as it afforded me the opportunity to give my perspective of what it is like to live with the condition on a daily basis. The lessons learnt at this conference will be beneficial to me as an individual and also to the communities that I work with in the fight against diabetes. It is my hope that there will be more opportunities for people with diabetes to be heard at such important platforms going forward.

Read Heather’s full article on Diabetes Voice.
On June 24, Bernard participated in an advocacy meeting organised by the Diabetes Association of Nigeria at the College of Health Technology of Calabar. Participants included students, the College dietitian and the Provost.

Bernard intervened as a speaker and proposed the Provost to establish a diabetes club in the College, for members to share information and carry out outreach programmes. The College trains students who will work in the healthcare system, so it is important they receive sufficient information on diabetes that will allow them to easily identify diabetes warning signs and symptoms when they finish their degree. An early diagnosis is crucial to direct patients to relevant healthcare facilities, and provide them with the most appropriate treatment.

After Bernard’s presentation, the Provost expressed her enthusiasm regarding the project and promised to present it to the next management meeting. Both Bernard and the Provost are optimistic and hope for approval so that this project can come to life. A follow up meeting will be organised depending on the management’s decision.
Bernard Enyia (Nigeria)

On August 6, Bernard acted as a representative of the Diabetes Association of Nigeria at a meeting organised by the Nigerian government in Abuja to present the first National Multisectoral Action Plan (NNMSAP) for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (NCD) for the period 2019-2025, in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Bernard spoke about his experience living with diabetes and the costs associated to its management. He will be involved in the Action Plan implementation, which will be led by WHO through the Ministry of Health, and in partnership with other key stakeholders.

This Action Plan will allow to better address the common risk factors that exist between noncommunicable diseases, including diabetes, and to increase diabetes prevention.

More information about this meeting can be found on the AFRO Region WHO website.

Osarenkhoe Ethel Chima-Nwogwugwu (Nigeria)

On June 20, several organisations, including the Diabetes Association of Nigeria Gbagada Chapter, the Lagos State Primary Healthcare Board and the Lagos State Medical Guild, organised a meeting to discuss the work of Primary Healthcare Centres in the field of diabetes. Osarenkhoe helped coordinate this meeting and participated as a speaker.

During the meeting, the Diabetes Association of Nigeria requested that the 324 Primary Healthcare centres of the Lagos State work closely together and organise diabetes education trainings for their staff.

Meeting participants have agreed to meet one and a half month after the first meeting to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU). This will hopefully be a first step to improve the knowledge of healthcare professionals about diabetes, so they can better care for their patients living with diabetes, prevent and treat complications optimally.
AWARENESS-RAISING

Erum Ghafoor (Pakistan)

On June 16 and 30, Erum supported the Baqai Institute of Diabetology and Endocrinology (BIDE) organising two events about performing Hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca, the fifth of the Pillars of Islam) while having diabetes. The events, which took place in Karachi, had two different target audiences: while one targeted people with diabetes, the other was addressed to healthcare professionals.

Pilgrimage can be a very challenging experience mentally and physically, so it is important to ensure that people living with diabetes know how to perform it safely, and that doctors are aware of the risks and educated on this topic.

Erum participated in an expert panel, providing her insights and responding to questions and concerns regarding diabetes management while performing Hajj. Participants were requested to fill feedback questionnaires after the events, and most of them reported having learned a lot thanks to the expert panels.

Osarenkhoe Ethel Chima-Nwogwugwu (Nigeria)

On July 27, Osarenkhoe participated as a speaker at an event organised by the Emerald Lions Club Anthony Village in Maryland (Lagos), in her capacity as President of the Lions Club of Gbagada General Hospital for 2019-2020. The objective of the event was to raise awareness about diabetes and its complications, and to educate participants on how to lead healthy lifestyles.

About 250 people from the Ebonyi State indigenous communities residing in the Lagos State attended the event. Osarenkhoe coordinated the diabetes screenings and blood pressure checks, and offered advice to participants.

The event also counted with breast cancer screening activities and eyeglasses distribution, at no cost for participants.

The event was a success despite the critical meteorological conditions, and showed the potential of community-based activities in for the promotion of healthy lifestyles, including healthy diets and regular physical exercise.
**EDUCATION**

**Sérgio Louro (Portugal)**

On July 8-10, Sérgio and the organisation he presides, Associação Diab(r)etes, organised a holiday diabetes camp in Santarém (Portugal).

During the three-day camp, 18 participants between 25-40 years old had the opportunity to live and exchange experiences with other people who share the same condition. The goal was to provide education to increase diabetes acceptance, and for all the participants to have a good time.

Sergio was in charge of the camp planning and organisation, lead a sessions on mobile apps that can help managing diabetes, and participated in dynamic activities, workshops and night talks.

Participants reportedly left the camp feeling more relaxed and informed about diabetes, and confirmed the camp had had an important role in accepting their condition.

![Image of participants at the diabetes camp]

**Betsy Rodriguez (USA)**

On July 27, acknowledging that Facebook is a unique communication tool in terms of use and reach, the IDF SACA region hosted a Diabetes Nutrition Colloquium in Spanish in this social media platform.

The two speakers were Betsy, a diabetes educator, and Aida Sisco, a dietician. The discussion focused on nutrition for people with diabetes and on healthy dietary options, including the “healthy plate” strategy.

The Colloquium intended to present in a simple way the evidence from the ADA Nutrition Consensus Report and to demonstrate the plate method as a strategy to promote and adopt healthy diets for people with diabetes.

The talk was very interactive and successful, with participants living with diabetes from several countries in Latin America, and who had the opportunity to ask their questions to the experts.

Betsy, in her capacity of IDF SACA region press secretary and digital manager of the regional Facebook page, was also in charge of organising the event and promoting the content.

The event reached more than 3000 people, with a total of 100 questions from participants. The Facebook post was shared 30 times and viewed 1,400 times. It can be accessed on this link.
On June 30, Christine, helped the National Diabetes Association in Lebanon (Dialeb) organising a one-day summer camp in Tripoli for adults living with all types of diabetes. The objective of the camp was to help participants learn how to better manage their condition, and to make them feel included in the diabetes community.

The event took place at Khan al Saboun, in Koura. Activities were led by professionals, including an endocrinologist, a life coach, and a dietitian (Ms Lina Farhat), who offered interactive talks related to diabetes management.

The participants, adults with type 1 or type 2 diabetes, took part in a tour of the eco village and were treated to a healthy lunch. They had the opportunity to share their experiences and testimonies. As one of the organisers, Christine led educational trivia games for the attendees.

In addition to her role of organiser, Christine was also in charge of social media coverage, planning and scheduling the activities and following up with attendees and sponsors.
5K@IDF Run/Walk 2019

The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) Congress 2019 will bring together the global diabetes community to tackle a broad range of diabetes issues, from latest scientific advances to cutting-edge information on education, diabetes care, advocacy and awareness.

If you are joining us in Busan to shape the future of diabetes, **don’t forget to register for the 5K@IDF Run/Walk 2019!**

The 5K@IDF brings together citizens of Busan and IDF 2019 delegates to emphasize the need for increased physical activity to help prevent diabetes and diabetes complications. This activity aims to **raise awareness about the importance of a healthy lifestyle in preventing type 2 diabetes and managing all types of diabetes.** Watch the video of the previous 5K@IDF, which took place in 2017 in Abu Dhabi, [on this link](#).

Do not hesitate in taking a first step towards a healthier lifestyle and [register here](#).

World Diabetes Day 2019

In 2019, World Diabetes Day’s theme remains the same as in 2018: **Diabetes and the family.**

IDF has already published new visuals, including posters in English, French and Spanish with this year’s slogan: **“Diabetes: Protect your family”**. We invite you to discover them and share them with your network. They are [available for download](#) on the WDD website.

You can also **help raising awareness about diabetes** by taking IDF’s [quiz to test your knowledge of diabetes](#). Once you have taken it, you can share your result and invite your family and friends to participate.

If you are interested to learn more about World Diabetes Day, we encourage you to [watch or rewatch IDF’s webinar on the topic](#).

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**Disclaimer**

The views and opinions expressed by the BCV members within this newsletter do not necessarily represent IDF’s views and opinions.