



Indo-US Diabetes Coalition Calls for India's Urgent Attention to Diabetes Prevention

Network of Concerned Individuals Partners with PHFI to Mark World Diabetes Day

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Today, one day in advance of World Diabetes Day, student representatives from 40 schools across Delhi met Mrs Gursharan Kaur, the wife of the Honorable Prime Minister of India, seeking her support, urgent attention and action to aid diabetes prevention in India. And today, a new group focused on diabetes prevention among younger generations in India – the Indo-US Diabetes Coalition – was launched. Reinforcing the theme for this year's World Diabetes Day - *Diabetes Education and Prevention* - the Diabetes Coalition, a network of concerned individuals declared this week as Diabetes Week, and urged young Indians to pay attention to healthy living and strive to prevent serious diseases such as diabetes.

At a press briefing called by the Diabetes Coalition today, medical experts, NGOs, youth organizations and members of civil society agreed that “*Diabetes Can and Must be Prevented*”. As part of its efforts to spark an interest in healthy living in young people and their communities, the Diabetes Coalition and several of its partners, including The Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), Health Related Information Dissemination Amongst Youth (HRIDAY-SHAN) and Centre for Chronic Disease Control (CCDC) together organized a week-long campaign to draw attention to diabetes. The campaign involved 40 school-centered walks throughout Delhi that took place earlier this week to raise awareness of diabetes and its prevention.

Recognizing the alarming burden of diabetes in India, the Diabetes Coalition and partners presented a Memorandum of Requests to Mrs. Gursharan Kaur. About 4,000 students, teachers and parents who participated in the diabetes prevention awareness walks this week were signatories to the Memorandum, as were several prominent organizations, and individuals from different sectors of society.

Emphasizing a healthy diet and physical activity in diabetes prevention, Prof. K. Srinath Reddy, a key member of the Indo-US Diabetes Coalition's Scientific Steering Committee said, “Though India is the diabetes capital of the world, there is clear evidence that people can protect themselves from diabetes by eating a healthy diet of whole grain cereals, vegetables and nuts and by being physically active throughout the day. It is especially important to protect children and adolescents from overweight and sedentariness.”

"We believe we are at the beginning of an important movement to shape India's health," said Dr. Nalini Saligram, who started the Indo-US Diabetes Coalition. "Today, we call on young Indians to understand the serious impact of diabetes and learn how to avoid or delay diabetes and its complications. We also call on the Indian government to implement effective strategies and policies for diabetes prevention. Using advocacy and awareness, our aim is to bring about social change that galvanizes young Indians to take up exercise and reduce unhealthy eating for long-term health benefits."

Has India earned the title ‘*Diabetes capital of the world?*’

Today, about 230 million people live with diabetes in the world, a figure that has gone up from only 30 million in 1985 (International Diabetes Federation - IDF); this figure is expected to grow to 438 million by 2030.

Every 10 seconds a person dies from diabetes-related causes. Diabetes is increasing faster in the world's developing economies than in developed countries. According to the World Health Organization, by 2025, ¾ths of the world's people with diabetes will be living in developing countries.

The incidence of diabetes in India is extremely high and is growing rapidly. India has the world's largest population of people with diabetes: 40 million, which is expected to double to 87 million by 2030 (IDF). And prevalence rates in both rural and urban areas in India are rising rapidly.

Emphasizing the importance of diabetes prevention and control activities, Dr. Nikhil Tandon, eminent endocrinologist from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and an active member of the Scientific Steering Committee of the Indo-US Diabetes Coalition, said, "Prevention of diabetes has become a key aim for health care professionals and there is consensus that every opportunity should be used to educate people about strategies for diabetes prevention. Pivotal clinical studies have clearly shown that diabetes is preventable, at least in individuals who have a high risk for the disease. Medical practitioners and public health experts the world over agree that what is most needed now to reduce the burden of diabetes at the population level are lifestyle interventions such as exercise and diet."

"All of us in global health are concerned with the growing burden of non-communicable diseases in India. And whether we live in India or outside it, we want to work together to bring the best science and practices in medical and non-medical fields to prevent such diseases. I applaud all such efforts to prevent diabetes, especially in younger generations, where they can have substantial impact," said Dr. K.M. Venkat Narayan, Ruth and O.C. Hubert Professor of Global Health & Epidemiology, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, USA.

Mr. Bobby Khurana, student of Dev Samaj Modern School, Nehru Nagar, New Delhi, commented that half of India's population is young – under 25 years – "so it is very important that we take charge of our own health for individual progress and our country's future. We want to march towards a healthy future by following healthy eating habits and exercise. We thus request the government to enact enabling health promoting policies".

The Indo-US Diabetes Coalition plans to achieve its goals of diabetes prevention through a combination of grassroots education and media engagement activities, and intense communications and advocacy efforts including interactions at the highest levels of the Indian government. The task at hand is so huge that no one entity can achieve all that is needed on its own. The Indo-US Diabetes Coalition will work through many partners and NGOs and draw on the best practices from India and the US to accomplish what it has set out to do.

For more information see please visit: www.indousdiabetes.org; www.phfi.org; www.hriday-shan.org; www.ccdcindia.org.

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