

DSN Forum newsletter – May 2020

What a strange month it has been! The whole world is in lockdown due to a global pandemic. COVID-19 has disrupted every aspect of our lives, from the way we work and shop to how we socialise with our friends and family. Diabetes Specialist Nurses, amongst other healthcare professionals, have had to change the way we work to avoid putting ourselves and our patients at risk of spreading this deadly virus. As expected, here in the DSN Forum, we have all come together to help each other, with resources such as the latest guidance from TREND-UK, ABCD and PCDS being shared to a national Zoom meeting set up by Nurse Consultant Lesley Mills. The files in the Forum have never been so full of PDFs and YouTube videos helping us to do all our clinics and education virtually.

We did a poll to see how many DSNs have been redeployed across the UK. Some teams have had up to 80% of their staff redeployed into other areas, such as wards or community nursing, to support the COVID effort. A lot of remaining DSNs have been able to work remotely, conducting their reviews by telephone and virtual clinics using systems such as accuRx. I really think this is going to change the way we work going forward, and I hope a lot of the skills we have gained using technology will continue into the future even after all the restrictions are lifted.

Even in all this uncertainty, we have seen some real beacons of light shining through, such as the @Diabetes101 Twitter account. This account was started in March to help answer all the questions we as HCPs were getting across social media, in one evidenced-based, up-to-date, easy-to-access format. As the shielding guidance and social distancing rules were being changed almost daily, it was really important to us that the diabetes online community had somewhere they could ask questions in order to alleviate the worry we were seeing across social media. Partha Kar asked

Beth and me to get involved and we jumped at the chance to get a team together. Before long we had 21 volunteers, ranging from DSNs to GPs, pharmacists, consultants, dietitians, paediatric teams, a psychologist and even, as we named her, a “queen of eyes” in the team. We started a group chat in WhatsApp and, as you can imagine, this was buzzing morning, noon and night as we tried hard to answer all the questions coming in. We had over a million impressions on Twitter in the first few weeks! We also did loads of activities and games to keep people’s spirits up – afternoon tea was always my favourite time of day. As the weeks have gone on, the number of questions has reduced but we are still there from 10 in the morning till midday and from 6 till 8 in the evening, Monday to Friday, for anyone that needs us, and we will be until at least the last bank holiday in May. See the video from the team at:

<https://youtu.be/pikjEaTseuY>



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Diabetes Specialist Nurse Forum UK

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Professor Gerry Rayman celebrates the award of his MBE with his team.

Another great online account is [Art1st](#), a group of people with type 1 diabetes who have a host of special talents such as painting, photography and music. We have enjoyed seeing all the exciting skills that we have in our diabetes community.

April saw the start of Ramadan, and we shared a host of resources on all our social media sites to ensure that HCPs could advise people with diabetes

on how to stay safe during the fasting period. April would have been Type 2 Diabetes Prevention Week but, due to the pandemic, this – much like everything else – was cancelled. We marked the week in the Forum by sending out resources from [Diabetes UK](#) and [NHS England](#) helping people to find out their risk and learn strategies to help modify diet and lifestyle to reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

April should have also seen the celebration of our good friend Professor Gerry Rayman, who was awarded the MBE. His team organised a special celebration, complete with top hat and cake, and they shared the pictures with us on the Forum. Congratulations, Gerry, from all of us here. It is very well deserved!

In Forum news, we had some big announcements. We hit 3000 Twitter followers and we welcomed our 1500th diabetes specialist healthcare professional into the Forum. Not only did we have this great news but we also added two new members to our admin team: DSNs Tamsin Fletcher-Salt, who works at Royal Stoke University Hospital, and Vicki Alabraba, who is part of the Liverpool Diabetes Partnership. We are really excited to get some fresh ideas and viewpoints in our little team, so watch this space for more exciting things to come. ■

