

Team Blood Glucose: Outperforming diabetes



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Team Blood Glucose is a not-for-profit social enterprise whose mission is to inspire people living with diabetes, and those at risk of developing the condition, to better understand why “Movement Matters”. Its aim is to help all people with diabetes at any level of fitness to achieve their goals through peer support, education and opportunities to take part in events “outperforming diabetes”.

Born out of the Great Britain Diabetes Online Community (#GBdoc on Twitter) in 2012, Team Blood Glucose was formed when its founder, Paul Buchanan, recognised the need for more comprehensive education in sports and exercise for people with or at risk of type 1 and type 2 diabetes. It was formed to provide the education and opportunities that many people felt they lacked in order to be more confident in activity and exercise.

Sporting activities and projects

Last year, in what has become an annual event, a group of six cyclists with diabetes rode from the venue of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD) 2014 Annual Meeting in Vienna, Austria, to the 2015 venue in Stockholm, Sweden. Covering over 2000 km in 12 days was no mean feat; however, with the tools and knowledge to accomplish such a distance, all riders successfully completed the ride despite their diabetes. It is this knowledge that Team Blood Glucose hopes to share with the whole community. As well as the annual 2000 km grand tour, Team Blood Glucose also organises the “B2B” ride, travelling from Barcelona to Bilbao over 1 week in the summer. The idea behind this ride was to create a more manageable challenge than the grand tour that was more accessible for riders who perhaps want to build their experience and stamina for a longer ride, or who would simply like to cycle for 7 days across Spain.

In line with the B2B ride, 2016 will see the launch of the new Team Blood Glucose Bike Camp, a 7-day education course for people with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes to join others in learning how to manage exercise and diabetes together and, ultimately, how to achieve endurance activities. The course will comprise 7 days’ half-board accommodation in Mallorca, with education provided by a team of specialists and accompanying medics for support, along with a reasonably distanced cycle ride each day: “ordinary people achieving extraordinary things”.

In 2016, Team Blood Glucose is looking to launch more projects for children and young adults, in an effort to get people of all ages to be more active, and to promote people living longer, healthier lives. The first event planned is a day of sports activities in the East Midlands for children and teenagers, in partnership with the Queen’s Medical Centre paediatric team. While planning is still in its early stages, the idea is for a group of young people to spend the day doing a range of sporting activities, from track and field to team sports, in safe surroundings and with teams of medics and trained professionals on hand to provide support.

The Diabetes Online Community

Of course, Team Blood Glucose would not exist without #GBdoc. This was established as an online presence for people in Britain with or at risk of diabetes to engage with each other in a way few had experienced before. For many people, it had been difficult in the past to meet others with diabetes and to share experiences and advice, and so #GBdoc was set up to create a bank of information for everyone, whether they were diagnosed yesterday or 20 years ago. Having grown into 14 countries, the Diabetes Online Community is thriving, and the UK’s own #GBdoc is part of a worldwide network that now reaches over 92 million people.

Every Wednesday night, a “tweetchat” is hosted on the #GBdoc Twitter account (@theGBdoc) at 9 pm, each week covering a new topic related to living well with diabetes. Previous topics have included “Diabetes and the Teenage Years”, “Diabetes Research and the Future” and “Friends and Family – What Should They Know About Diabetes?”. Chats last for 1 hour and always finish with a game of #BGBingo – in which a random number between 4 and 8 is posted and participants have to test their blood glucose with a picture of the result: if you match the number, you win! The #GBdoc tweetchats have now been recognised by the NHS as an innovative tool in the management of diabetes.

Community events

#GBdoc isn't just online: 2015 saw the very first People With Diabetes Conference (PWDC) in Nottingham, in association with Team Blood Glucose. Held as a 1-day event, PWDC attracted 150 people with diabetes from all over the country to meet others and talk about the condition and their life stories. Using an “open space” format, in which no agenda was set in advance and all discussions were decided on the day, after 8 hours only half of the suggested topics had been covered, leading the organisers to make the 2016 event a 2-day affair held

Further information

Team Blood Glucose is a not-for-profit social enterprise company with a single purpose: to help all those with or at risk of diabetes learn how to use activity, sports and exercise as a core tool in the management of diabetes.

Details for all Team Blood Glucose events can be found at: www.teambloodglucose.com or on Twitter: @TheTeamBG

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on 27–28 February.

The 2016 event will also be bigger, bolder, and brighter based on feedback from 2015, with a new space specifically for children and young people to have their own groups, as well as a “GBdoc Bake Off” competition, with prizes for the best low-carb cake, and a “Challenge Team Blood Glucose” event, in which attendees can face off against designated Team Blood Glucose teammates in pop-up sports competitions. Prices start at £30 for under-18s and can be found at: www.peoplewithdiabetesconference.com. ■

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