

Increasing awareness through World Diabetes Day



Debbie Hicks

World Diabetes Day was first initiated in 1997 by the International Diabetes Federation (IDF). It has since become an annual event held on 14 November, and its aim is to raise awareness about diabetes and all its implications globally.

In 2007, World Diabetes Day was made official by the United Nations with resolution 61/225. This year, to celebrate the event, I was invited by the IDF to share a “flight” on the London Eye. This flight was shared by many healthcare professionals, IDF officials, Diabetes UK officials and, more importantly, people with diabetes. During the flight we were able to observe the awareness-raising messages that were projected onto the Shell Building opposite the London Eye.

Raising awareness campaign

Last year the team in Enfield decided to use World Diabetes Day as the launch-pad for our awareness raising campaign in the Turkish population in the borough – our largest ethnic group. We developed a project outline many months before the date, which included the following:

- Engaging our Turkish-speaking link-worker to carry out a simple questionnaire with local people to assess how Turkish people access healthcare, and also what barriers may prevent them from accessing healthcare.
- Building relationships with a local GP and businessman to help promote the event on World Diabetes Day to their fellow Turks.
- Securing space for a stand in our local shopping centre to use during the event.
- Engaging a local Turkish chef to compile a short cookbook with healthier options to traditional Turkish dishes; our dietitian also helped with this part of the project. Four-hundred copies of this cookbook were printed, which included simple messages about living healthily to prevent diabetes. The cookbook was printed in both Turkish and English.

One week before the event we attended a press conference for seven Turkish newspapers and the local Turkish television channel to promote the event. On the morning of 14 November 2008 we set up the stand. The stand was supported by myself, a DSN, three health trainers (one of whom speaks Turkish), the Turkish GP and the Turkish businessman.

Any person visiting the stand could pick up information relating to diabetes, healthy eating, increasing activity and smoking cessation, plus the cookbook. We also had a short questionnaire enquiring about symptoms of diabetes that people could complete. If anyone had two or more of the symptoms stated they were offered a screening appointment in a nearby pharmacy. The screening appointment, performed by the pharmacists, included the opportunity to have a random blood sample taken for glucose and cholesterol levels, and have their blood pressure and weight measured. During the day there were 25 appointments, and of these, 14 people were advised to make an appointment to see their GP for further testing.

Both the Turkish television channel and people from all of the newspapers attended the event on the day to capture the interest shown by the local Turkish population. We saved the newspaper clippings so we could have them translated into English.

Reflection

Looking back now I feel it was a successful event, which raised the awareness about diabetes and the possible problems associated with it, especially if not treated promptly. If you wish to read more about this initiative please see the December publication of *Diabetes & Primary Care* where our experience is to be published.

What did you do on this year's World Diabetes Day to raise awareness of the condition? Please do not hesitate to contact us at the journal and share your experiences. ■

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