

The Melbourne Declaration on Diabetes

A Sanders

On 2nd December 2013 I attended the first meeting of the Parliamentary Diabetes Global Network (PDGN) in Melbourne, Australia. The meeting was attended by invited parliamentarians, representing 50 countries and we agreed and signed a declaration on diabetes, now known as the Melbourne Declaration.

Meeting in the Victoria State Parliament building, Members of Parliament (MPs) from across the globe reported on the state of diabetes care in their own countries, discussed how to raise the profile of the condition and agreed the declaration calling for urgent action to address the diabetes pandemic, committing the signatories to work across parliaments to help prevent the incidence of diabetes, ensure early diagnosis and improve the treatment of people with the condition.

The meeting elected two Vice-Presidents, Dr Rachael Nyamai MP (Kenya) and Simon Busuttill MP (Malta), and myself as the first President. I was invited to attend as the Chairman of the United Kingdom All Party Parliamentary Group for Diabetes and of the European Policy Action Network for Diabetes (ExPAND). I have also lived with type 1 diabetes for a quarter of a century.

There is, of course, already a great deal of cross-national communication among medical professionals, pharmaceutical companies, health ministers and patient groups. However, for a long time there was nothing that linked the parliamentarians who can actually set the agenda, influence budgets and vote for policies. That is why the Parliamentary Diabetes Global Network has been established. This, the first global network of parliamentarians for a specific medical condition, is intended to create a platform to raise the profile of diabetes within governments across the world.

Through the communication of ideas and best practice and the encouragement of action within parliaments around the world we can move towards an important tipping point, where the allocation of resources and efforts to prevent, diagnose and treat diabetes is no longer questioned. The urgency required cannot be over-stated

given the rising tide of diabetes across all continents and countries rich and poor. Already the scale of the challenge threatens the health care budgets of many countries and the economic progress of some.

There are over 382 million people with diabetes most of whom are aged between 40 and 59 years, and 80% of them live in low- and middle-income countries. All types of diabetes are on the increase, type 2 diabetes in particular: the number of people with diabetes will increase by 55% by 2035. An additional 21 million cases of high blood glucose in pregnancy are estimated to contribute to the global burden of diabetes. That is equivalent to 17% of live births to women in 2013 that had some form of high blood glucose in pregnancy.

In human as well as financial terms, the burden of diabetes is enormous, leading to 5.1 million deaths and consuming some 548 billion US dollars in health spending. This equals 11% of the total world-wide health spending in 2013.

However, the growing prevalence of diabetes is particularly marked in middle and low-income countries. They face specific pressing issues such as malnutrition, environmental change, rapid urban development, changes in diet and progress is hampered by poor healthcare systems and funding shortages.

As the number of people with diabetes in middle and low-income countries grows, the importance of the group will also grow. By functioning as a forum for parliamentarians from around the globe to share ideas, knowledge and experiences from their own countries, it will serve to help countries that are less well-prepared to tackle the increasing prevalence of diabetes. The opportunity to discuss these issues with parliamentarians who have experienced similar changes in recent years will be one of the great benefits of the network.

Nevertheless, the diabetes pandemic remains a global one. Our priority in the early years will be to build a coalition of advocates for action to tackle the pandemic at local, regional, national and trans-national level. The network will focus on raising the matter in parliaments and assemblies across the globe in order to spread better understanding and awareness of diabetes and the urgency with which it needs to be addressed.

*Adrian Sanders, Member of Parliament,
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA, UK.*

Below is the declaration signed on 2nd December 2013 in Melbourne, Australia, now known as the 'Melbourne Declaration on Diabetes'. This was made by a group of international Members of Parliament known as the 'Parliamentary Champions for Diabetes Forum'.

We commit ourselves to working across Parliaments with all who have a special interest in diabetes and hereby agree to establish a 'Parliamentarians for Diabetes' global network with the following objectives to:

1. Exchange policy views and practical initiatives of relevance and to hear from experts on opportunities for action and progress in the prevention and management of diabetes. To always strive for 'best practice', and advocate for people with diabetes, their families and carers, and those at risk and to become a powerful force internationally to respond in a coordinated and focussed way to the diabetes pandemic and to promote the diabetes cause.
2. Provide parliamentarians with the opportunity to attend meetings organised by the IDF and their Member Associations, aiming to improve health outcomes for people with diabetes, stop discrimination towards people with diabetes and prevent development of type 2 diabetes. A special focus should be the different regions of the globe to ensure practical solutions are offered.
3. Establish a platform for the dialogue between IDF Member Associations and other stakeholders to exchange information and discuss special areas of common interest. These will include prevention, workforce, costs of diabetes, access to medicines, and effective strategies to combat and manage the pandemic. To report back to ministers, parliamentarians and other key decision-makers in our home countries and to seek commitments to deliver on the targets set at the 66th WHA in 2013. The global network will support the sharing of resources such as research, legislative initiatives, prevention campaigns and joint initiatives relevant to the various regions of the globe.
4. Encourage all governments to acknowledge that diabetes is a national health priority that requires a comprehensive action plan leading to action.
5. Respond to and participate in relevant debate and discussion on and related to the World Health Assembly, World Health Organization, United Nations and other appropriate organisations or government bodies and specifically to ensure the inclusion of diabetes and NCDs in the post-2015 development framework noting this framework should be aligned with the goals and targets on diabetes agreed at the 66th WHA. Diabetes intersects all major dimensions of global development, including poverty reduction, gender inequality, education, environmental sustainability and infectious diseases.
6. Confer honour and express gratitude to those Members of Parliament supporting the diabetes cause, wherever they may be and to use our best endeavours to recruit other Members of Parliament for this purpose.
7. Create opportunities for networking and building relationships between Members of Parliament, other key decision-makers, the IDF and its Member Associations and others. To hold meetings in various regions of the globe as agreed, and to meet again as a Global Forum at the next World Diabetes Congress in 2015.
8. Appoint a global co-ordinator with appropriate administrative and management support to assist the global network to achieve the above objectives.