

Ascensia diabetes care hosts the second EMEA nurse symposium in Vienna, Austria

On 9–10 November 2017, Ascensia Diabetes Care organized the second EMEA Diabetes Nurse Symposium in Vienna, Austria. The meeting focused on mastering the challenges of diabetes management and was targeted at diabetes nurse educators (DNEs) from Eastern European countries, the Middle East, and Africa. The objective of the event was to provide education on relevant diabetes care topics for the nursing community that would help them to address the issues they face in daily practice and the care of their patients.

The meeting took place at the Hotel Imperial Riding School and included a comprehensive one-and-a-half days of educational sessions. The programme consisted of various presentations and panel discussions which were specifically designed to address the educational needs of DNEs. The sessions were tailored towards providing valuable information to DNEs on mastering challenges in diabetes, while offering them a platform to share best practices with colleagues from other countries.

On the first day, the presentations focused on three specific topics of particular relevance to the DNEs in their daily practice: Today's challenges from a nurse perspective; Diabetes management from a patient perspective; and Complication challenges from a medical perspective. There was particular interest in the section on complication challenges, which focused on the identification and management of complications associated with diabetes.

Professor Akif Mehmet Büyükbese provided an overview of diabetic neuropathy as an important microvascular complication of diabetes. In contrast to other microvascular complications like retinopathy and nephropathy, which tend to occur at later stages of the disease, he explained that neuropathy can affect almost 50% of patients with type 2 diabetes and in some cases may be the first sign of the diagnosis of diabetes when it has gone unrecognized. There are various ways in which neuropathy can present in patients with diabetes, including tingling, coldness or burning sensation and numbness in the lower extremities. Current treatments are focused more on alleviating symptoms, rather than treating the underlying causes, so management strategies are more important to prevent further progression of this complication.

Associate Professor Primoz Kotnik presented on the development of obesity and its impact on diabetes. He explained that although there is a genetic predisposition to obesity in certain people, it is rare that genetics are

the sole cause of obesity, and environmental triggers, such as poor nutrition and sedentary behaviour, have a major role in the development of obesity. He added that the presence of excessive adipose tissue and the altered function of this tissue in obese individuals is a key mechanism for insulin resistance that leads to metabolic complications. Most of the alterations that take place with adipose tissue in obese individuals are irreversible, meaning that early treatment and prevention are critical to prevent further complications.

For the second day, three interactive sessions were organized to enable the participants to share and discuss with other nurses some of the challenges they experience in their own country and present the groups' key findings to the entire audience. The discussions were followed by presentations on future insights in diabetes from the perspective of the AASD (Arabic Association for the Study of Diabetes and Metabolism) and FEND (Foundation of European Nurses in Diabetes).

As one of the closing sessions, Dr Pratik Choudhary presented on the topic of future trends in diabetes self-management. He discussed the changing nature of self-management and the tasks that people with diabetes need to perform to enable them to successfully manage their condition themselves. He also provided examples of current and future technologies that will enable better self-management, including proximal technologies, such as sensors, apps and pumps, and distal technologies, including the use of big data and intelligence support to provide management recommendations. Overall, technology will enable more effective self-management that minimizes the impact on people with diabetes. The day concluded with a talk on the opportunities for mHealth in diabetes management to improve diabetes tracking and provide easy access to valuable data for healthcare professionals and patients.

The symposium ended with closing remarks from the President of FEND and Symposium Co-Chair, Mrs Anne Felton who said 'I felt that the first day of the symposium was perfect, with many critical topics covered, and the workshops on the second day have been interactive and lively with the participants were really engaged.'

The faculty comprised of medical doctors, nurses, and patients from the EMEA region, and included Prof. Inass Shaltout (Egypt, President of AASD and Symposium Co-Chair), Prof. Angus Forbes (UK), Anne Felton (UK), Prof. Akif Mehmet Büyükbese (Turkey), Ass. Prof. Primoz Kotnik (Slovenia), Dr Adnan Al Shaikh

(KSA), Dr Pratik Choudhary (UK), Mr Nenad Simunko (patient from Croatia), and Mrs. Amal Abu Hanoud (patient from Jordan).

The symposium was endorsed by AASD and the FEND and attracted more than 100 participants, most of whom were DNEs representing 16 different countries.

The feedback from the participating nurses was that the ‘presentations were of high quality and informative’,

‘included inspiring patient testimonies’, and ‘were relevant to their daily practice’. The attendees also shared that it was interesting for them to learn about their colleagues’ challenges and positive outcomes. Participants left the conference feeling more excited and confident about managing challenges in diabetes care and were grateful to Ascensia for arranging this engaging and valuable educational programme.