



# Diabetes: health crisis of the 21st century



**Dear FEND member,**

The title of this editorial may seem startling; but those working in diabetes and people with the condition will recognise its validity. This will be the theme of FEND 11th Annual Conference, 12–13 September 2006 in Copenhagen. The ongoing increase in the number of people with diabetes threatens to overwhelm healthcare systems worldwide, and could lead to the first reduction in life expectancy for more than two hundred years. We are truly challenged. Awareness is growing in countries around the world of the need for a comprehensive and collaborative response to this rapidly emerging global threat – sadly, however, not necessarily at government levels.

FEND, together with International Diabetes Federation (IDF-Europe), continues to pursue an EU Council Recommendation on diabetes and, to this end, four MEPs (John Bowis, Georgs Andrejevs, Dorette Corby and Karin Scheele) will pursue a written declaration in the European Parliament. In order for the declaration to succeed, more than two thirds of MEPs must sign. This written declaration is available for signature now in the European Parliament and must be completed by 6 April 2006.

The declaration reads as follows:

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Rule 116 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas diabetes is a serious chronic and progressive condition affecting over 25 million people in the EU, with an expected increase of 16% by 2025,
- B. whereas the serious and costly complications of diabetes include cardiovascular disease and stroke, kidney failure, amputations and blindness,
- C. whereas there are some 60 million people in Europe at risk of developing pre-diabetes,
- D. whereas an EU diabetes strategy would help contain public health expenditure in EU Member States, bearing in mind that diabetes complications represent 5% to 10% of total healthcare spending,
- E. whereas the merit of a co-ordinated EU approach has been demonstrated by the EU Council Recommendation on cancer screening,
- F. whereas the Austrian EU Presidency (2006) is prioritising Type 2 diabetes,
  1. Welcomes the Presidency's initiative on diabetes;
  2. Calls on the Commission and Council to:
    - prioritise diabetes in the EU's new health strategy as a major disease demonstrating a significant burden across the EU;
    - encourage Member States to establish national diabetes plans;
    - develop an EU diabetes strategy and draft an EU Council Recommendation for Diabetes Prevention, Diagnosis and Control;
    - develop a strategy to encourage consumption and production of healthy food;
  3. Instructs its President to forward this declaration, together with the names of the signatories, to the Council and the Commission.



## **Austrian Presidency**

The Austrian Government, during its Presidency of the EU (January to June 2006) has made the prevention of type 2 diabetes a key subject of its health summit. FEND and IDF-Europe are official collaborating partners in organising the conference with the Austrian health ministry. We in FEND were honoured to be invited and have co-operated wholeheartedly. The summit took place in Vienna, 15–16 February. Each Member State was entitled to send four representatives. The conclusions of the health summit will be submitted to an informal meeting of EU Health Ministers in April 2006. Following this meeting, the recommendations will be submitted to the EU Council for ratification in June 2006. The conclusions of the Austrian Presidency health summit will be published by the Austrian Government through its official channels. These steps will lead, we hope, to a formal recommendation on diabetes in Europe – but this is a slow process.

## **UN Resolution on diabetes**

At a global level, IDF are pursuing a UN Resolution on diabetes. This ambitious and timely project is being led by the President-Elect of IDF, Martin Silink. FEND is unreservedly supportive of this project and is committed to contributing to this global initiative. (See the report by Martin Silink on page 10.)

I hope that through your national nursing organisations you will be supportive of this important global effort by informing your national Members of Parliament of the project to engage their approval and thus ensure that their governments, as members of the UN, sign the petition. Ensuring the support of a majority of UN Member States for this declaration is central to its success. I believe that we can influence our respective parliaments; I hope that your national organisations will lobby their Members of Parliament to ensure its success.



### Executive committee changes

We are delighted to welcome Vivien Aldridge (UK) and Kristin de Backer (Belgium) to the Executive Committee following the 2005 elections. They will serve for a period of three years and a potential further three years subject to the formal election process.

Sue Hamilton (UK), a co-founder of FEND, and the first FEND Secretary has stepped down from this office. We pay tribute to her unstinting commitment to FEND from its beginning. In honouring her contribution, FEND has awarded Sue Honorary membership of the Federation.

The Executive committee has appointed Mrs Deirdre Kyne-Grzebalski, currently Treasurer, as Chairwoman-Elect FEND. She will take up the position of Chairwoman at the end of 2006. We wish her every success in this role. The Executive Committee has appointed Anne-Marie Felton, current Chairwoman as President from the end of 2006.

### Elections 2006

In 2006, vacancies will arise in the Executive Committee. Members will receive nomination forms in May. We urge you to consider offering yourselves to serve on the Executive Committee as it is important that we have broad representation from the membership.

### FEND ENDCUP

The Executive committee is currently reviewing the FEND ENDCUP programme and its future development. All participants who have completed FEND ENDCUP are asked to respond to the questionnaire which is being sent to participants by Seyda Ozcan. This will help us enormously in our deliberations as we consider carefully its future development and implementation. FEND ENDCUP certificates for successful participants of the 2004–2005 programme will be formally presented during the 2006 conference.

### National diabetes nursing organisations village

A new feature at the FEND conference is a proposed 'village' enabling national diabetes nursing organisations to share their objectives, achievements and challenges. Should Chairpersons or Presidents of national organisations wish to take advantage of the opportunity, a single poster may be displayed in the village area. There will be no charge for this. If you wish to take part, please let Anne-Marie Felton know by 1 May 2006. Finally we thank all our sponsors in the pharmaceutical industry for their continuing support.

Until we meet in Copenhagen, I wish you every success in all your endeavours.

**Anne-Marie Felton**  
FEND Chairman

# The diabetes epidemic – the case for a UN Resolution on diabetes



Diabetes is a chronic disease, one which is for the most part hidden. The rise in type 2 diabetes (responsible for 90% to 95% of diabetes) engenders little of the emotion associated with infectious disease epidemics. However, it is an epidemic nonetheless. Each year, another 6 million people develop diabetes. In addition, the insulin-dependent form (type 1 diabetes), which afflicts mainly young people, is also rising alarmingly. Compared to HIV/AIDS, it is a low-key epidemic and yet a similar number of lives are lost because of it each year. In 2003, an estimated 194 million adults – or 5.1% of the global adult population – had diabetes. Approximately 3 million died directly because of diabetes with an even greater number dying of cardiovascular disease made worse by diabetes-related lipid disorders and hypertension. The projections indicate that by 2025, 6.3% of the

global adult population will have diabetes (334 million people).<sup>1</sup>

This silent epidemic is threatening to overwhelm future medical services if left unchecked. The risk factors for type 2 diabetes include non-modifiable risk factors (ageing and genes) and potentially modifiable environmental factors, such as urbanisation, obesity, a sedentary lifestyle and possibly stress. The adverse effects of both sets of risk factors collide especially in indigenous peoples (including Native Americans, First Nation Canadians, Indigenous Mexicans, Indigenous Australians and Torres Strait Islanders) where diabetes occurs in 50% or more of adults aged over 35 years. The very existence of some indigenous populations is threatened and it is a race against time to turn this epidemic around in these groups. Yet, no country or region is immune to the rise in diabetes that goes hand in hand with the epidemic of obesity.