

Diabetes care in India and Southeast Asia: the way forward

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It is an immense privilege to contribute this editorial to the International Journal of Diabetes in Developing Countries, the official journal of RSSDI. Recent WHO data highlights an alarming surge in diabetes prevalence, particularly in India and across Southeast Asia. As President of the International Diabetes Federation, I am deeply cognizant of the challenges posed by this crisis, but I am equally inspired by the opportunities and innovations emerging from this region. With over 240 million adults living with diabetes in India alone, this region sits at the epicenter of a global health crisis. Yet, it stands out as a hub of resilience, ingenuity, and potential for transformative progress.

The passion and dedication of diabetes care professionals in this region is nothing short of remarkable. Their tireless efforts to provide the highest quality of care fuel my confidence that the solutions to the diabetes crisis will be driven by the innovation and creativity of Indian leaders. However, stark disparities in access to and availability of care remain a significant hurdle. Conditions such as malnutrition-related diabetes and undiagnosed or misdiagnosed cases highlight the need for urgent action. The growing prevalence of type 2 diabetes, especially among younger populations, foreshadows a daunting rise in morbidity and mortality.

This is unacceptable. Together with RSSDI and the International Diabetes Federation, we must act decisively to build a community of professionals passionate about improving diabetes care. The future of diabetes management in India and SEA requires a multi-faceted approach:

1. **Empowering prevention:** Prevention is our first line of defense. Community initiatives promoting healthy eating, physical activity, and early detection must be expanded. Awareness campaigns tailored to cultural contexts can reshape health behaviors and outcomes.
2. **Reinforcing primary care:** Primary care must become the backbone of diabetes management. Equipping healthcare workers with advanced skills, integrating smart technology, and ensuring access to essential medicines and diagnostics are critical steps.
3. **Leveraging technology:** Smart health solutions, mobile platforms, and telemedicine can bridge gaps in care, particularly in underserved areas. Harnessing artificial intelligence and innovative technologies should become central to our strategy, with the mantra: “Smart health for every diabetes patient.”
4. **Advancing policy advocacy:** Policymakers must prioritize diabetes as a national health concern. From subsidizing care to promoting healthy lifestyles and regulating the marketing of unhealthy foods, supportive policies can foster an environment of change.
5. **Fostering collaboration:** Partnerships among governments, healthcare providers, academic institutions, and civil society are crucial. Collaborative efforts can propel research, optimize care delivery, and ensure equitable access to resources.

As President of the International Diabetes Federation, I have outlined three key goals:

- A. **Being in the diary (or the brain) of every healthcare politician in the world:** Through the Global Diabetes Index (GDI), we will annually monitor and compare the quality of diabetes care worldwide. This initiative will motivate stakeholders and policymakers to take tangible steps toward improving care.

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- B. Being in the pocket of every diabetes patient:** Collaborating with platforms like Google, Meta, and Instagram, we aim to create a globally accessible diabetes education program, leveraging smartphones to empower every person living with diabetes.
- C. Being in the heart of every healthcare professional:** Through the IDF Fellowship Programme (FIDF), I invite all healthcare professionals and those passionate about diabetes care to join us in building a global community committed to elevating care standards.

Finally, I encourage you to stay connected through my WhatsApp channel, where I will share updates on IDF activities and initiatives. Together, let us shape the future of diabetes care through better understanding, education, and decisive action. Follow my WhatsApp channel: Prof. Peter Schwarz, Germany, President of IDF.

<https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029VahezrgKLaHiSBpoOx0k>

Our collective efforts can redefine the future of diabetes care in India and SEA. By taking action today, we can create a healthier, brighter tomorrow for millions affected by or at risk of diabetes.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Prof. Peter Schwarz

President, International Diabetes Federation



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