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TuDiabetes

Diabetes mellitus is a chronic disease that affects 347 million people worldwide. The World Health Organization estimates that diabetes will be the world's seventh-leading cause of death by 2030. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that nearly 26 million people in the United States, or 8.3 percent of the population, have diabetes.

Diabetes threatens the quality of life of millions of individuals in the United States, especially ethnic minorities who are at a higher risk of developing the disease. TuDiabetes.org is a social support Web site dedicated to increasing public awareness of diabetes prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Because TuDiabetes is committed to improving the quality of life of individuals of diverse ethnic and

socioeconomic backgrounds, the site is of interest to human services professionals in the United States and abroad.

Diabetes

Diabetes is characterized by high levels of glucose in the blood as a consequence of poor insulin production, an inappropriate response of the body's cells to insulin, or both. Diabetes is grouped into three main types: type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes. Type 1 diabetes is often diagnosed in young children, adolescents, and young adults. Type 2 diabetes occurs over time and mostly affects people over 40. Gestational diabetes develops during pregnancy in women not previously diagnosed with the disease. If not managed properly, diabetes can cause serious complications, including heart disease and stroke, blindness, gangrene, and kidney failure.

Diabetes disproportionately affects ethnic minorities in the United States. African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics are almost twice as likely to develop the disease as non-Hispanic whites, which places diabetes among the top health disparities in the nation. Type 1 diabetes is not preventable; however, type 2 diabetes can be avoided through lifestyle changes, such as dieting and exercising. Research suggests that social support is crucial for individuals who are trying to make and maintain these lifestyle changes and manage their illness.

TuDiabetes Inception

TuDiabetes is an online community and social support network serving people with diabetes, their families, and friends. The Web site is part of the Diabetes Hands Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing awareness for diabetes-related causes. The nonprofit was founded in 2007 by Manny Hernandez, a Venezuelan-born electrical engineer and social media author, and his wife, Andreina Dávila, an architect and designer also from Venezuela. Hernandez, who graduated with a master's degree from Cornell University, was diagnosed with latent autoimmune diabetes in adults (LADA).

As described by the National Institutes of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, LADA is characterized by signs of both diabetes type 1 and diabetes type 2 and is generally diagnosed after age 30. LADA is not officially recognized as a type of diabetes, but it is considered a subset of type 1

diabetes. Following his LADA diagnosis, Hernandez became aware of the importance of having a strong support network for diabetes management and control. He and Dávila created TuDiabetes in particular for individuals who lack that support.

TuDiabetes.org

TuDiabetes claims more than 31,000 members. In addition, it reaches an excess of 24,000 members via EsTuDiabetes, the Spanish-language version of the site. Both versions of the Web site share the same platform, which includes 11 tabs and five main page sections. The tabs include home, my page, members, forum, blogs, groups, events, media, other programs, donate, and chat. The my page section allows members to create a personalized space where they can maintain a blog, initiate discussions, post milestones and photos, create groups, and answer questions about their particular situation. The members section highlights participants from all ages and nationalities who are selected by the organization for their high level of activity in offering helpful and friendly advice to other members on the Web site. Approximately 13 members are featured on any given day. Participants can engage in conversations with other members through the forum section. Forums are divided by themes that might appeal to the different interests of participants. Some topics or themes include type 1 and type 2 diabetes, new to diabetes, diabetes treatment, diabetes sports and fitness, and continuous glucose monitoring.

In addition to forums, participants express their opinions and concerns through blogs. More than 13,500 blog posts have been featured on the site. Members can search the Web site for blogs in several main categories, including featured, latest, and most popular. The blogs center on a variety of topics tagged under descriptors such as type, insulin, pump, blood, and diabetes. Blog posts are archived by month from 2007. Besides forums and blogs, TuDiabetes members are active in more than 400 group discussions. The group setting allows members to connect with other individuals who share their concerns, interests, or geographical region. The United Kingdom Diabetics group, for example, has 367 members. Other groups include the Diabetics in Southeast Asia and India, Dexcom Users, Diabetic Food and Cooking, and even Inked Diabetics, a group for diabetics with tattoos.

Events, Programs, and Advocacy

Whereas forums, blogs, and groups provide members with venues to express their ideas, opinions, and thoughts, the events tool offers outside community experts the opportunity to advise members on a wide range of diabetes-related subjects. Online talks featuring diabetes educators, ophthalmologists, nutritionists, and other experts specializing in diabetes care are conducted live, recorded, and posted under the events tab. Members can join and remotely participate in the online events as they are taking place, or they can view the recordings later at their convenience.

Diabetes programs and advocacy efforts that go beyond the membership community are also incorporated into the Web site. Diabetes Advocates is a program of the Diabetes Hands Foundation prominently featured on TuDiabetes.org. The program aims to educate the public and the media about all matters related to diabetes. The advocates' main objective consists of disseminating information about the proper reporting of diabetes-related information and to emphasize that diabetes is a conglomerate of metabolic diseases, all with different characteristics that the media should not lump into one single category.

The Big Blue Test is another of the organization's central programs. It strives to demonstrate that exercise decreases blood glucose levels by as much as 20 percent. The program encourages members with or without diabetes to record their blood glucose, get active for 14 to 20 minutes, test their glucose again, and share the results online. For every entry that is logged, the Diabetes Hand Foundation, with help from corporate donors, makes a donation to non-profit organizations serving people with diabetes around the world. Fund-raising results are revealed every year on November 14 during World Diabetes Day. In 2013, Big Blue Test beneficiaries included projects in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Selecting nonprofits in the Caribbean as beneficiaries of the Diabetes Hands Foundation's grants contributes to diabetes awareness efforts in that region and promotes the efforts of EsTuDiabetes.org.

EsTuDiabetes

Although EsTudiabetes.org follows an identical design and navigation as TuDiabetes.org, EsTuDiabetes is entirely Spanish-language based, and it tailors its forums, blogs, and groups to its

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Spanish-speaking members. This is most apparent in the events section, where diabetes-related events taking place in Spanish-speaking countries are highlighted, including *La Marea Azul se Mueve* in Spain, the *Desafío Urbano en Tiempo Real* in Argentina, and the *2do Encuentro Multidisciplinario en el Día Mundial de la Diabetes* in Mexico. EsTuDiabetes features more than 2,600 blogs, almost 150 groups, and more than 6,047 forum discussions. Video chats featuring experts on diabetes issues are also available on the events tab. Unlike TuDiabetes, the live interviews and informative segments are not as prominent. EsTuDiabetes also lacks the advocacy tab featured in TuDiabetes.

Diabetes has been labeled a global epidemic. The Web sites TuDiabetes and EsTuDiabetes have developed a diverse network for diabetes patients and their families, and are inclusive of individuals from various ages, nationalities, and diabetes types. Through these Web sites, the Diabetes Hands Foundation is developing awareness about the disease and providing emotional support to a diversity of people in the United States and around the world.

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See Also: Caribbean Immigrants; Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey; Hispanics Immigrants; National Alliance for Hispanic Health; Native Americans; Pregnancy and Parenting Services.

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Twelve-Step Programs

Since 1935, 12-step recovery programs have been a staple in the treatment of alcoholism. Bill Wilson and Dr. Robert Smith founded Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), resting on the belief that people who shared the same problem could assist each other in overcoming that problem. In 1948, Al-Anon was established to support the spouses of alcoholics. In 1953, Narcotics Anonymous (NA) was founded upon the AA principles. Subsequently, Cocaine Anonymous, Pills Anonymous, and Marijuana Anonymous have emerged. The 12-step program model has been adopted by compulsive gamblers, overeaters, sex and love addicts, debtors, and codependents. Twelve-step groups maintain the AA format with minimal adaptations to address their specific issues. Overeaters, for instance, abstain from specific foods.

The original tenets of AA remain in practice as the 12 traditions. These traditions address how all 12-step programs operate.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.
2. For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.