

ECUADOR

In Ecuador, the DONUM Foundation offers a well-structured program for diabetes education. DONUM is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that designs and implements health projects, mainly in the primary and secondary health services of marginalized rural and urban centers. DONUM created the diabetes education program because of growing awareness of the epidemic proportions of morbidity from diabetes in Ecuador and the difficulties state health institutions have encountered in trying to cover the whole Ecuadorian population. The program was also designed to meet the need for more health services and education programs for the poor (working people with diabetes, indigenous peoples with limited access to medical care).

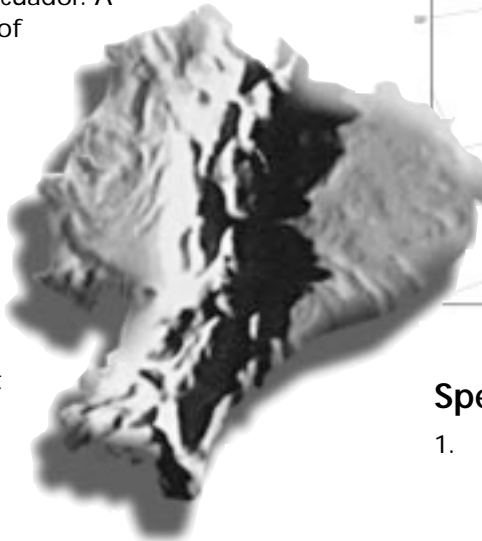
The DONUM Medical Center is located in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador. A multidisciplinary team of health professionals, including an endocrinologist, two medical internists, three ophthalmologists, three nurses, and a social worker, is responsible for the diabetes education program. A nutritionist and a psychologist volunteer their services.

In its initial stages of development, DONUM was able to grow thanks to generous funding from two Belgian nongovernmental organizations⁽⁸⁾. This financing contributed to implementation of programs and organization of activities during the first years of DONUM.

Goal

Increase awareness in the community (among people with diabetes and health professionals) of the importance of diabetes education as an integral part of diabetes treatment.

8. The DONUM Foundation took responsibility for development of infrastructure, the medical team, and supplies.



Specific objectives

1. Increase the level of knowledge about diabetes and promote a positive attitude toward the disease among people with diabetes and their family members. This is assumed to foster improvement in the psychological and social well being of the patient.
2. Increase patient compliance with recommendations from the team about nutritional properties of food groups and eating habits.
3. Improve the patient's feeling of competence with regard to self-control. This is expected to have a positive impact on patients' quality of life and their capacity to live normal lives (engage in physical activity, attend social events).
4. Improve the self-care skills of patients and their capacity to interpret the results of tests of metabolic indicators (HbA1c, arterial tension). This can contribute directly to preventing the emergence of complications.
5. Make people with diabetes, their family members, and care providers more aware of the importance of diabetes education as part of the treatment plan.

6. Reduce morbidity and mortality rates by disseminating information as a means of preventing the emergence of complications of diabetes.
7. Increase patients' awareness of the importance of foot care and early detection of possible complications. Patients need to incorporate special foot care into their daily routines.
8. Teach positive and responsible attitudes toward diabetes self-care. This is achieved with the social support gained through participation in social activities for people with diabetes (for example, annual walks for people with diabetes).
9. Encourage the formation of groups or associations for and by people with diabetes, in which they can obtain social support.

Content or topics

1. Psychology applied to diabetes
2. Nutrition
3. Arterial tension and diabetes
4. Physical activity and sports
5. Diabetes self-care
6. Foot care for people with diabetes
7. Sexuality and diabetes
8. Ophthalmologic care
9. Proper care of the kidneys

Methodology

The DONUM education program offers individual and group sessions led by a health care team. The teaching methodology used, described as "inductive-deductive," is based on talks and group discussions during workshops. Medical endocrinologists, internists, teaching nurses, and other specialists, (nephrologists, nutritionists, and psychologists) give these talks.

Different workshops are offered during the year, with sessions on nutrition, physical activity, glucose self-monitoring (in blood and urine), and social activities.

The group sessions take place once a month (for 2 hours) and consist of a talk by a health professional and a coffee break. The group sessions are held at different sites. The talks are usually given in the DONUM Foundation auditorium. The physical exercise workshops are held in a neighboring school gymnasium. The nutrition workshops are held at the School of Nutrition of the Medical School in Cuenca.

The individual sessions for people with diabetes are conducted in physicians' offices and last for about an hour. As a part of the program, there is an initial consultation session with each patient. An important goal of this initial interview is to determine the patient's special individual needs so that health professionals can meet those needs in the education program. Patients who participate in the education

program also have access to consultations with medical specialists at low cost as well as to medical laboratory tests. This is possible through a special cooperative agreement with health care professionals who participate in this program.

Target population

People of low socioeconomic level with type 1 and type 2 diabetes who need specialized medical care. Participants pay a minimum fee, a requirement intended to strengthen the patient's commitment to participate in the process.

Materials

- DONUM has available the following types of educational resources and materials for its workshops, talks, and activities:
- Patient manual entitled "Manual for People with Diabetes: What Do You Know About Diabetes?(9)"
- Printed matter (pamphlets, documents)
- Chalkboards
- Opaque projectors and slide projectors
- Videotapes
- Films
- Medical supplies for self-care training sessions (glucometers, insulin injections, glucose test strips)

Evaluation of the program and the participant

The education process begins and ends with an evaluation. These evaluations (surveys, questionnaires, interviews) are often given after each activity. In addition, indicators of metabolic control are evaluated periodically (HbA1c, BMI, arterial tension). The results of these evaluations are used for presentations at scientific meetings and other forums⁽¹⁰⁾.

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9. DONUM prepared this manual, which serves as a guide for planning educational activities.

10. Results of these evaluations are not available.