

Insulin for Life Australia and Global report

By Talia Raab, July 2015

Overview of the first diabetes camp in Vietnam for poor children living with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus.

Details of camp:

Date: 26-28 June, 2015

Location: Emerald Island, Thanh Thuy District, Phu tho Province

Attendees:

Insulin for Life Australia and Global participants- Neil Donelan, Ron Raab, Tali Raab, Liz Raab (Australia).

Overseas participants- Sharron Chen (Taiwan), David Huang (Taiwan), Sally Morita (Japan) and Touch Khun (Cambodia).

Note of Appreciation: We appreciate the kind donations of both the International Diabetes Aid Fund of Japan (IDAFJ) and the diabetes supplies (including test strips, blood glucose meters, alcohol swabs, lancets, and sugar gels) donated by Dr. Neng-Chun Yu.

Objectives

1.) Core aims and potential benefits of a camp for poor children with Type 1 Diabetes mellitus (T1DM):

- To have fun
- To meet other children with T1DM, form friendships and feel less isolated and alone living with the condition (in many cases this could be the first ever encounter).
- To receive education on how to manage T1DM. This includes accurately monitoring blood glucose, self- administering insulin injections and learning how to deal with T1DM in relation to sickness, hypoglycaemia, and exercise and so on.

2.) Purpose of involving an international team to:

- ***Assist in the start-up of this camp, with the goal of it becoming self-sustainable.***

Essential to the future success of this Vietnam camp is the initiation by Insulin for Life of networking, collaboration and effective communication with local health professionals, organisers and other involved bodies, relevant to/ working in diabetes in the Asian region.

Over the next few years a major role of Insulin for Life Australia and Global involved participants will be to act as 'mentors' or 'consultants' to provide the advice and utilise the experience acquired from involvement with the development of past camps in other countries (such as Philippines and Ecuador). The ultimate goal of IFL Australia and Global in relation to the Vietnam Diabetes Camp is to assist in developing this camp to a point at which it is capable of being organised and managed solely by local organisers (without IFL/overseas input), and administered on an annual/regular basis.

- ***To form bonds, create a sense of community and contribute practical advice/ emotional input/ reassurance to children and parents with diabetes.***

This has the potential to be transformative to the children's psycho-social wellbeing, their self-esteem and how they view and manage their own diabetes. Personal contact and experience from children, parents, and health professionals at past camps (such as Philippines and Ecuador) has provided the crucial insight that children diagnosed with T1DM often experience bullying, segregation and being ostracised.

As well, parents and children often display feelings of fear and uncertainty for their future (such as future life stages including study, career, marriage and children) due to the potential complications T1DM. Addressing these issues can fall within the scope of overseas participants, either in a formalised or ad hoc, casual manner.

- ***Educational input***

To present professional material (from overseas participants who may work in a diabetes related professional field) and practical advice (from overseas participants living with T1DM) to parents and children who are living with T1DM.

3.) To contribute diabetes supplies

- Insulin for Life Australia and Global to supply camp with donated insulin and diabetes supplies to provide for children attending the camp. This includes all supplies required during camp, as well as daily blood glucose monitoring administered by health professionals at the camp.

Outcomes and evaluation

1.) Overall sentiment

The overall feelings by camp organisers and physicians were overwhelmingly positive. Discussions held on the last evening dinner (particularly by the host, Professor Binh) at the Sen restaurant in Hanoi, which included key organisers, the IFL team and overseas participants demonstrated the appreciation for the presence of the overseas participants and pride in the fruition of this first camp (which had merely been an idea, a year prior). Dr. Tung and Dr. Sam had participated in the first camp for poor children with T1DM in the Philippines in May 2014 with the goal of gaining experiential learning and using the insights gained for the first camp for poor children with T1DM to be held in Vietnam.

2.) Financing/ sponsors/ groups interested in this collaboration

• Participant contribution

Overseas participants paid a fee of \$150 USD. This was both a positive and necessary strategy in the start-up stage of this camp; however it is necessary to think about the structure of camp finances/ sponsors available. It is appropriate for participants to contribute towards cost of camp. However, the goal is for the camp is to be self-sustainable down the track it should not be dependent upon overseas participant financial contributions, in determining it running each year. This may be an issue which evolves with time.

- Representatives from sponsoring companies were present. In particular Medifood (Korean food Brand Company) expressed eagerness to be present at future camps. This could be an option to be further developed as a source of income for diabetes camps in Vietnam in the future.
- Both the Australian and Israeli ambassadors showed interest in the efforts to improve the lives of poor children living with T1DM in Vietnam. Connections were formed at a dinner at the home of Meirav Shahar, the Israeli Ambassador to Vietnam where Hugh Borrowman, the Australian Ambassador to Vietnam also attended. Both Ambassadors made the trip to attend the children's camp and witness the activities. There is the hope that this relationship can develop and prosper in some way in Vietnam due to both Ambassadors being based locally in Vietnam; as well as the Australian- Israeli involvement already existing through Insulin for Life Australia and Global activities. Furthermore, Embassy/ Ambassador Collaboration with local health professionals could assist in laying the foundations for locally involved and sustainable diabetes camps in the future.
- Kim Anh Dang, a Vietnamese lady, who lives in Da Nang, Vietnam has showed eagerness to help improve the lives of people living with T1DM in Vietnam, and has met with Neil Donelan several times at Diabetes related encounters. Kim Anh made the trip specifically to visit the camp and make contact with the IFL Australia and Global team, and overseas participants. The possibilities/ potential presented here can be further developed in the future.

3.) Location of the camp

- The location of the camp (a few hours by bus outside of Hanoi) was a suitable venue. It provided a quiet and spacious place for children to attend lectures, educational activities, eat, and monitor blood glucose and with a health professional and parent several times a day. It has a pool and games and rides park nearby.
- Daily activities were held in major parking area beneath the main floor of the hotel. Although this provided shade and shelter from sun, the temperature remained over 35 degrees Celsius most days. Potentially in future, activities could be conducted in the dining hall area which was kept cooler by fans. This may also reduce potential fatigue of children.