# The National Diabetes Organization - DiaLeb

When I was finishing my PhD, after having four children, I had a feeling that this would be the most I could achieve in life. At that point, I never thought diabetes would be part of my plans. But after the diagnosis of my eldest daughter Sylvie at the age of 24 with Type 1 diabetes, it was like diabetes wanted to be part of my plans and that of my family's as well. After my daughter's diagnosis, we went through the normal phases. First, the shock of the news (she was young, healthy, with a normal body mass index and weight and active!), then the series of doctors and nurses' visits and feeling overwhelmed with all the new information. The adaptation process took some time until finally accepting the fact that Sylvie had to live with diabetes, taking insulin shots, for the rest of her life. Her determination to learn about her condition and move on kept us all determined to stay positive and support her in any way we could. However, finding information and support groups proved difficult and we had to resort to



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International Diabetes Federation (IDF) - Center of Education Certificate

American or UK-based associations and patient support forums

It was then that we started thinking about what we could do to help people living with diabetes in Lebanon. That is how we started with the National Diabetes Organization-DiaLeb. The idea was simple, to increase awareness about diabetes to as many people as possible, and to provide accessible, reliable and credible information to patients. Since then and almost 9 years on, we, at DiaLeb have been working to promote diabetes awareness across Lebanon. Further, we wanted to create a patient support system to allow people to find others living with diabetes to exchange stories and support each other. On a personal level, having been through this situation with Sylvie, I am very willing to help and support every mother or family member of a recently diagnosed child/adolescent/young adult with type1 diabetes.

The main reason for starting DiaLeb was definitely Sylvie being diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. However, once I began searching for information about diabetes and after having learned about the large number of people affected around the world, challenges people face when there is



Community Awareness Program Dialeb

not enough information to manage the complications in uncontrolled diabetes, I started to think that we needed to do more than what we were already doing. It was at that point where we started to structure our programs and divide them into several categories to ensure we maximize our reach. Our set of programs and activities will be discussed in depth later.

DiaLeb works to provide necessary knowledge to communities about the warning risk factors and signs of diabetes. More importantly, we educate communities on the importance of healthy living, eating a balanced diet and exercising, which can significantly help to avoid diabetes or delay its onset. Finally, we work with those living with diabetes to ensure they have all the support needed to effectively manage their disease and avoid costly complications.

Given my role, I have also been attending many local and regional conferences and congresses which serve to keep my information updated and to learn from others and exchange ideas on how we, as a patient-centric NGO can perform better towards our Lebanese community.

## DiaLeb's Objectives:

- To raise the awareness and develop communication strategies regarding the need for prevention and the necessity of good diabetes control.
- To disseminate appropriate information and educational

materials.

- To help affected people improve their lives and enhance quality nutrition care.
- To deliver community programs and services to high-risk populations.

### DiaLeb's Work:

The main goal of the National Diabetes Organization - DiaLeb, is to promote awareness about diabetes.



Summer Camp for Type 1 Diabetes Patients



It is important that people are educated about the signs and symptoms, risk factors and treatment options so they can prevent and manage diabetes. DiaLeb has developed a series of tailored programs to provide awareness to different segments of the population and efficiently reach those at risk of or living with this disease. DiaLeb also offers community support groups, and patient training, an internship program for nutrition students, and engages in numerous social activities, all with the aim of promoting diabetes awareness and enhancing the lives of those affected by and living with the disease.

### DiaLeb's Programs and Activities:

DiaLeb works tirelessly to reach communities all throughout Lebanon to create awareness and prevent diabetes among at-risk populations, while ensuring that all people with diabetes receive the best care, treatment, and gain knowledge about how to control their condition. Our programs include:

- Diabetes in the Classroom: where our experts go around schools to educate students about diabetes prevention and healthy living
- Community Awareness Programs: through which we partner with municipalities to provide awareness sessions to their constituents, with free glucose testing
- Annual Summer Camp for Type 1 Diabetes



Diabetes in the Classroom

- Community Internship Program
- Sports Activities
- Patient Education Session: tailored to patients living with diabetes to enhance their knowledge and provide a community feel
- Trainer workshops: aimed at diabetes care professionals including advanced carbohydrate counting
- World Diabetes Day Activities
- Local and International Events
- Social Activities

#### **Publications:**

- 1. Annual magazine: "DiaLeb Review" which focuses on healthy living and everything related to diabetes. The magazine is bi-lingual with content in both English and Arabic.
- 2. Website and social media content (articles, recipes, did you know?) published on a weekly and monthly basis.
- 3. Bi-monthly e-newsletter

# Our achievements to date - DiaLeb in Numbers 2019:

Throughout 8 active years we have reached thousands and carried out the following:



Hike to prevent Diabetes - Ehden

# Recognition of DiaLeb's role and accomplishments:

#### Member of IDF:

In 2016, Dialeb became an official member of the International Diabetes Federation, which falls under

the World Health Organization Umbrella as a lead NGO focusing on diabetes in Lebanon.

### **UNGC Member:**

DiaLeb is a member at the United Nations Global Compact Network since 2015 and is working towards SDG #3 which revolves around health and wellbeing through raising awareness about health and diabetes across Lebanon.

### **Center of Education Certificate:**

In 2018, DiaLeb became an International Diabetes Federation (IDF) accredited Center of Education offering several workshops for health care professionals in different fields related to diabetes care.

