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THE LEADING MAGAZINE FOR ENDOCRINOLOGISTS

Endocrine news

Endocrinology ENCORE

ENDOCRINE SCIENCE IS ON THE LEADING EDGE OF FINDING NEW WAYS TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES OF AN AGING POPULATION. *ENDOCRINE NEWS* ADDRESSES HOW TREATING THIS DEMOGRAPHIC HAS EVOLVED AND TAKES A CLOSER LOOK AT NEW TREATMENT AND RESEARCH DISCOVERIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR OF ENDOCRINOLOGY.

- The varied complications of treating older diabetes patients.
- Genitourinary syndrome of menopause: A hidden malady revealed.
- Endocrine scientists discuss the top breakthroughs of the year.
- What are the new treatments, therapies, and products that made headlines in 2016?

AN APP FOR THAT:

Running your lab from the palm of your hand!

WHY ENDOCRINOLOGY?

How Deena Adimoolam was influenced by her patients.

ENDOCRINE
SOCIETY 

1916-2016
100 YEARS
OF HORMONE SCIENCE TO HEALTH



Patients Are a Virtue

BY DEENA ADIMOOLAM, MD, Assistant Professor, Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Bone Disease, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, N.Y.

My inspiration to pursue endocrinology comes from the many personal and professional encounters that I have experienced throughout my career. My academic and professional mentors have molded me into the endocrinologist I am today with their knowledge, compassion, and dedication to bringing out the best in their mentees. The incredible stories that my patients share keep me motivated to be a better doctor every day. The patients that I've met, in every chapter of my life, demonstrate the ever-growing need for physicians to educate and empower the public.

During medical school, I chose to volunteer in a remote village in India where diabetes was highly prevalent. I remember spending many sleepless nights before that trip, familiarizing myself with diabetic drugs and all their mechanisms of action — I even made flashcards with the different types of insulin and their varying pharmacokinetic profiles!

When I arrived in India, much to my disappointment, I quickly learned that my flashcards weren't necessary. The needs of these villagers were complex, and I soon realized that insulin wasn't all that they needed. I met Narain, a 37-year-old farmer with type 1 diabetes who was blind in one eye and on the verge of dialysis. He was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at age 35, which was the same age he saw a doctor for the first time in his life! He did not understand his hyperglycemic symptoms for years, and thought it was a “natural part of aging.” Narain was engaged to be married, but as soon as the diagnosis was made, the wedding was called off. Diabetes affected his health, his life, and his future. Many of the villagers I met had similar stories. They had no education on what diabetes was, nor how to prevent it. I was surprised to be diagnosing individuals in their mid-70s with diabetes for the first time. I spent hours educating the villagers on diabetes, its symptoms, treatment,

and prognosis. I was hopeful that through promoting education and awareness, I could make a difference in their lives.

Post medical school, I continued to witness how a lack in health education and awareness leads to poor health outcomes and it had a profound impact on me. During residency at Yale I met Lara, a 22-year-old naturopath who presented to the hospital in diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) — her HgbA1c was 15. She was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at the age of 18, and despite medical advice to take insulin, she relied on Chinese herbs and a full carbohydrate restriction to treat her condition. When I asked her why she didn't want to take insulin, she answered, “Why do I need it when I don't eat carbs?” Our team educated her on why insulin was necessary to stay alive, and she told us we were the first people in four years to tell her this! She stopped all herbal medications and became a patient I continued to follow in clinic. Luckily she was never admitted for DKA again.

I found the stories of diabetic patients empowering and felt compelled to change their lives for the better through education and spreading awareness. With the mentorship of Dr. Stephen Huot and the Yale Primary Care faculty I discovered new outlets to share the importance of preventative medicine with the community. I worked with Dr. Huot to coordinate health fairs to provide preventative care and disease screenings to thousands of individuals in the community. Throughout residency, I spoke on primary care prevention on the radio and at various events throughout the area. I began to realize the power of media, and started to blog routinely on various health topics. ^{EN}

Stay tuned for part two of Adimoolam's “Why Endocrinology?” column in the January issue.

To celebrate 100 years of the Endocrine Society, throughout 2016 *Endocrine News* is running a “Why Endocrinology?” column in each issue. If you'd like to share your story with our readers, contact Mark A. Newman at mnewman@endocrine.org.