

# The DESG Awards-supporting research in Therapeutic Patient Education

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**Every year the Diabetes Education Study Group (DESG), one of the 15 study groups of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD), awards prizes of 600€ to two abstracts from those accepted by the EASD and one abstract from those selected by the Federation of European Nurses in Diabetes (FEND), to be presented at their Annual Meetings. These abstracts are evaluated by a commission formed of five members of the DESG Executive Committee. The announcement of this initiative is usually published in the May issue of the EASD journal, Diabetologia.**

In 2007, the abstracts chosen were:

EASD Meeting:

- Short-term effects of an educational program on health seeking behaviour for infections in patients with type 2 diabetes: a randomized controlled trial in primary care. K.J. Gorter, L.M.A. Venmans, E. Hak, G.E.H. Rutten; The Netherlands.
- Monitoring individual needs in persons with diabetes: results of an ongoing, nurse-led well-being assessment as part of the annual review. N. Zandbelt, M. de Wir, C.H.C. Lubach, N. Breas, F.J. Snoek; The Netherlands.

FEND Meeting:

- A group education program for adolescents with type 1 diabetes. L. Serrabulho, M.J. Afonso, F. Gonçalves, E. Moos, D. Ó, L. Pereira, J. Boavida; Portugal.

The three abstracts reinforce the importance of the socio-psychological and educational aspects of diabetes, for more realistic and better follow-up of patients, and consequently better management of the disease by the patients themselves. The conclusions show that:

More knowledge of the disease and a better risk perception can improve a patient's health-seeking behavior. Such attitudes can help fight patients' misconceptions and fears. They can also prevent some of the most common infections in people with type 2 diabetes.

Glycemic control is not a good marker for psychological balance, underscoring the need to assess well-being as well as clinical parameters.

Young people with diabetes can greatly benefit from exchanging knowledge of the disease and sharing experience with their peers, in group sessions. These sessions can improve their self-esteem and promote their personal development.

Since its foundation in 1979 by Professor Jean-Philippe Assal, the DESG has always defended a shift in the medical paradigm for chronic diseases such as diabetes. Thus, the DESG's aims are:

- Development and evaluation of educational programs with the final objective of improving the quality of life of the diabetic patient: promoting his/her independence; achieving better metabolic control; underlining the importance of prevention and early recognition of complications.
- Encouragement of relevant research

This new paradigm should be different from that of the acute perspective and should be based on the therapeutic education of patients to improve their skills for the

management of their disease, empowering them for a better quality of life, with long-term and supportive follow-up.

This principle should be disseminated, and health care professionals should be trained to fill in the gap left by their initial training focused on crisis situations.

With this goal, the DESG has been promoting the use of Therapeutic Patient Education (TPE) programs for more than 20 years, namely:

- Producing teaching letters aimed at health care professionals about pertinent subjects in the area of diabetes, such as foot care, losing weight, diabetic retinopathy, and nutrition, to name just a few;
- Distributing an electronic newsletter worldwide to communicate initiatives, publications, and research;
- Making the DESG Web site a multicultural and international tool for access to educational materials translated in several languages;
- Implementing training seminars for health care professionals, helping in the organization of 2- or 3-day meetings, which take place locally, fostering greater awareness of the need for TPE;
- Creating a DESG network to support DESG delegates to develop workshops in their own countries;
- Promoting research in the area of diabetes education and awarding prizes to relevant papers.

**At the next annual meeting, the awards will continue to reinforce the importance of carrying out more research on such a complex process: the patient's adaptation to a new situation, a new disease, and how to cope with it.**

**J.M. BOAVIDA**