

**Report of the 9th Spring Scientific Meeting of the EASD  
Psychosocial Aspects of Diabetes (PSAD) Study Group  
April 23rd – 25th 2004, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.**



by Cathy E. Lloyd PhD, Honorary Secretary, on behalf of the PSAD Executive Committee

The 9th Spring Scientific Meeting of the PsychoSocial Aspects of Diabetes (PSAD) Study Group of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD) took place in Amsterdam this year, hosted by Professor Frank Snoek, the PSAD Chair.

Thirty-six delegates (including 10 new members) attended from 13 countries (Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Sweden, Greece, UK and USA). At the business meeting Professor Frank Snoek (The Netherlands) announced that the PSAD Study Group will hold a diabetes symposium during the International Conference for Behavioural Medicine (ICBM) in Mainz, Germany (25-28 August 2004), and will convene an official symposium with the Diabetes Education Study Group at the EASD in Munich, Germany (5-9 September 2004).

The theme of this year's meeting was the psychological impact of diabetes complications and it was with great pleasure that Dr Snoek invited Professor Andrew Boulton (UK), Consultant Diabetologist and the Honorary Secretary of EASD, to deliver the Anita Carlson Lecture, entitled: "The challenge of the long-term complications of diabetes". The focus of Professor Boulton's talk was on end-stage renal disease. He described the onerous treatment options and how overwhelming these can be in terms of the proportion of each day that can be taken up with treatment. He also stressed the importance of education and training (for both patients and the nurses who care for them), before moving on to discuss the psychological effects of peripheral neuropathy. Given that hyperglycaemia can remain undetected for many years before diabetes is diagnosed (often through the presence of one or more complications), Professor Boulton asked how we can raise awareness of complications without raising anxiety levels.

The following morning commenced with oral presentations of 'work in progress' (otherwise known as projects being planned or newly started), chaired by Dr Bob Anderson (USA). Dr Christel Hendrieckx (Belgium) started the session by presenting her exciting work on the psychological impact of islet cell transplantation. Dr Hendrieckx showed that at 12 month follow-up people who had undergone islet cell transplantation had improved metabolic control but had increased levels of anxiety. This may have been related to concerns about treatment, side-effects of medication and uncertainty of outcome. Bart Thoolen (The Netherlands) then presented his thought-provoking work on a behavioural intervention designed to help self-management. This was part of the well-known ADDITION study in which three countries (UK, Denmark and The Netherlands) are currently participating.

Dr Arie Nouwen (UK) concluded this session by outlining his plans for a novel study of emotional reactions to food-related cues in people with Type 2 diabetes.

The second session of the morning, chaired by Dr Chas Skinner (UK), continued the theme of 'work in progress'. First, Koula Asimakopoulou (UK) talked about her research on the perceptions of risk of the development of diabetes complications, in particular for coronary heart disease and stroke. Then Dr Bernard Kulzer (Germany) discussed a research project on possible ways of implementing Type 2 diabetes prevention into clinical practice. Dr Kulzer emphasised the importance of combining weight reduction and physical activity in the one intervention as well as focussing on empowerment and self-management abilities of the participants.

In the final session of the morning, the Vice Chairman of PSAD, Dr Norbert Hermanns (Germany), presented the 1st PSAD/Novo Nordisk Science Award to Dr Frans Pouwer (The Netherlands). This peer-reviewed award was set up to stimulate and reward excellence in psychosocial research in diabetes. Dr Pouwer gave a presentation of his work on how structured monitoring of well-being is able to improve the psychological well-being of people with diabetes. His award-winning paper has now been published in *Diabetes Care*, 2001;24:1929-1935.

Following lunch, Dr Mirjana Pibernik (Croatia) chaired a session of "completed work", starting with a presentation by Dr Frank Petrak (Germany) on coping with Type 1 diabetes during the first two years after diagnosis. This interesting work demonstrated that coping strategies change over time and may be associated with stage of the disease. Dr Rachel Povey (UK) then gave an illuminating talk on dietary self-care in people with Type 2 diabetes. She showed the importance of understanding people's underlying beliefs if we are to encourage appropriate and effective dietary self-care. Finally in this session Dr Mark Peyrot (USA) presented his research on the relationship between complications and psychological well-being, using data from the DAWN (Diabetes Attitudes, Wishes and Needs) Study. Dr Peyrot's fascinating analysis suggested that the experience of diabetes complications increases people's concerns about negative health and social consequences, which in turn contribute to poor psychological well-being. These data have clear implications for diabetes care and the potential for psychosocial interventions to improve psychological well-being.

The afternoon concluded with a poster presentation session, in which 7 members exhibited their research. Dr Frans Pouwer (The Netherlands) presented a review of the literature on the role of long-chain omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids in the prevention and/or treatment of depression. Anke Braun (Germany) presented the results of a trial of a structured treatment and teaching programme for older people with Type 2 diabetes. She demonstrated that participation in a programme such as this can improve quality of life and reduce fear of hypoglycaemia. Another interesting poster was that by Dr Nuha Saleh-Stattin (Sweden), who reported on the development of a diabetes education programme for immigrant patients with diabetes. Dr Hilary Hearnshaw (UK) presented her plans for an exploratory study to record and analyse the insights and experiences of people who have lived with Type 1 diabetes for more than two decades, with the aim to understand the role of psychosocial factors in the development of or absence of diabetes complications. Alette Wessels (The Netherlands) described plans for an innovative piece of research to examine the effect of microvascular disease on the ability of the cerebral circulation to respond with an adequately increased blood flow following acute hypoglycaemia. A second hypothesis to be examined is that impaired acute microvascular response to hypoglycaemia will adversely affect performance in a memory task. Dr Maria Colombini also presented some work in progress, which is aimed at increasing the understanding of the implications of diabetes in adolescents' day-to-day lives. A further objective of Dr Colombini's research is to

improve awareness of the need for clear information for appropriate self-management in these young people. Finally, Mirela Pop presented practical strategies for overcoming psychological insulin resistance. This is a common problem found in many different countries represented at PSAD.

For the social programme on Saturday evening, delegates and their guests enjoyed a canal boat tour of Amsterdam, followed by a superb dinner (during which the waiters and waitresses provided excellent musical entertainment).

On Sunday morning, the final session of the PSAD meeting (oral presentations of “completed work”) was chaired by Dr Karin Kanc (Slovenia). Dr Arie Nouwen (UK) began the session with a presentation on the motivational determinants of dietary self-care. In an interesting study of French-Canadian adults with diabetes, Dr Nouwen demonstrated that self-efficacy and autonomous self-regulation predicted changes in self-care only in those people who were highly autonomous. Dr Elena Surkova (Russia) then presented her research on diabetes and depression, in particular the reaction to the diagnosis of diabetes complications. Dr Surkova suggested that there was a brief depressive reaction to complications, which could be considered similar to an adjustment disorder. The final presentation was given by Dr Marie Clark (UK), and led to an interesting debate on lifestyle behaviour change in people with Type 2 diabetes.

The 9th annual meeting saw Professor Frank Snoek (the Netherlands), the founder of PSAD, stepping down from his role as Chairperson. To mark this occasion, the incoming Chair, Dr Norbert Hermanns (Germany), gave a very well-received presentation to honour Professor Snoek. Using a well-constructed and highly amusing metaphor of the PSAD as a child that we have nurtured from infancy to adulthood, Dr Hermanns described the development of the PSAD under the leadership of Professor Snoek over the past 9 years, from the small fledgling group of researchers to internationally renowned group. It was a proud and emotional time for all as Professor Snoek received a standing ovation from the delegates. Dr Cathy Lloyd (UK) then thanked Dr Nuha Saleh-Stattin (Sweden) on behalf of the PSAD members for her incredibly hard work over the years as Honorary Secretary. Further thanks were given to Dr Jane Speight (UK) as outgoing Honorary Treasurer of the PSAD, by Dr Mirjana Pibernik (Croatia), who will be the new Treasurer. It remained for the new Chair of PSAD, Dr Norbert Hermanns to thank our sponsors, Soren Skovlund and Lisbeth Vang (Novo Nordisk, Denmark) for their excellent organisation of the meeting, their generous sponsorship and their hospitality, before declaring this exciting, thought-provoking meeting closed.

At the end of the meeting Dr Norbert Hermanns (local organiser of this meeting and Chair of the PSAD), expressed, on behalf of the PSAD, his thanks to Novo Nordisk for their generous support of this 10th Scientific Spring Meeting of the PSAD.