ABSTRACTS
FREE PAPER PRESENTATION

11th
Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Series:

'Diabetes Asia 2012'
Conference
October 17 – 21, 2012
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Conference Venue
HOTEL ISTANA
73, Jalan Raja Chulan,
50200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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FREE PAPER SESSION 2 NO. 10

WHAT HAPPENS DURING INSULIN COUNSELLING? A CONSULTATION BLACKBOX.

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Background review
Patient education plays an important role in insulin initiation in order to address patients’ fears and misperceptions. Healthcare professionals (HCPs) are patients’ main source of medical information about insulin.

Objective
To explore the content and delivery of information given by HCPs to patients with type 2 diabetes when initiating insulin.

Methods
In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Klang Valley and Seremban in 2010-11. HCPs consisting of general practitioners (n=13), medical officers (n=8), diabetes nurses (n=3), government policy makers (n=4), family medicine specialists (n=7) and endocrinologists (n=2) were interviewed. A topic guide was used to explore strategies to improve insulin initiation. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using a grounded theory approach.

Results & conclusion
HCPs covered a wide range of subjects when informing patients about insulin. Patients were informed about diabetes pathophysiology together with evidence of poor diabetes control. Emphasis was placed on normalizing the need for insulin in patients with diabetes. When discussing insulin, HCPs tended to stress the short-term and long-term benefits of insulin whilst downplaying side effects and risks. It was important to address patients’ myths and misperceptions about insulin. Some HCPs scared patients into starting insulin with diabetes complications.

The process of insulin injection was simplified for patients by using step-by-step instructions for injection and insulin pen ‘clicks’ to keep track of insulin dosage. Patients were told that the starting dose was low and injections were physically demonstrated.

In conclusion, delivery of information was done with a variety of methods and information needs to be consistent between HCPs. HCPs need to assess patients’ informational needs and decision making capacity when initiating insulin.