



Diabetes Care and Research in Europe: The St Vincent Declaration 1989

Representatives of government health departments and patients' organisations from all European countries met with diabetes experts under the aegis of the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), European Region, in St Vincent, Italy, on 10-12 October 1989. They unanimously agreed on the following recommendations, and urged their presentation in all countries throughout Europe for implementation.

Diabetes mellitus is a major and growing European health problem, a problem at all ages and in all countries. It causes prolonged ill health and early death. It threatens at least 10 million European citizens.

It is within the power of national governments and health departments to create conditions in which a major reduction in this heavy burden of disease and death can be achieved. Countries should give formal recognition to the diabetes problem and deploy resources for its solution. Plans for the prevention, identification and treatment of diabetes, and in particular its complications - blindness, renal failure, gangrene and amputation, aggravated coronary heart disease and stroke - should be formulated at local, national and European regional levels. Investments now will earn great dividends in the reduction of human misery and in massive savings of human and material resources.

The general goals and five-year targets can be achieved by the organised activities of the medical services in active partnership with diabetic citizens, their families, friends, and workmates and their organisations; in the management of their own diabetes and the education for it; in the planning, provision and quality audit of health care; in national, regional and international organisations for disseminating information about health maintenance; and in promoting and applying research.

*Unanimously adopted at the 1st Meeting of
The St Vincent Declaration Diabetes Action Programme
St Vincent, Italy, 10-12 October 1989*



Istanbul Commitment 1999

People with diabetes still needlessly go blind, develop end-stage kidney failure and suffer high rates of heart attack, stroke and gangrene. Their social lives continue to be marred by ignorance and discrimination.

Powerful evidence now shows that much of this physical and social damage can be prevented. The St Vincent Declaration of 1989 called for prompt and effective action to apply this knowledge and so greatly improve life and health for people with diabetes. To achieve these objectives it is imperative that:

Individual nations review and renew their efforts to meet the St Vincent objectives.

The St Vincent Declaration has been endorsed by government health departments, health professional bodies, associations of people with diabetes and many others. Their words must be converted to deeds. They must convene, individually and in partnerships, nationally and locally, to review progress and renew momentum, formulating clear plans of action with feasible, locally appropriate targets and firm dates for their attainment.

People with diabetes are recognised as key members of the 'therapeutic partnership'

Effective self-management of the diabetes and active partnership in the treatment team are essential for promoting the health, independence and self-reliance of people with diabetes. This can be achieved only if priority is given to provision of information, education and preparation. The right of access to and explanation of personal health information is an important part of this.

Modern tools and technology are used

The skilled use of modern techniques of treatment and the methods of information technology are of proven value in raising the quality of diabetes care. Health care teams should be trained and equipped, validated support systems and guidelines should be prepared centrally and modified locally, systematic quality improvement should become part of routine practice.

Action is accelerated in areas of great need

Pregnancy in the diabetic woman, physical and emotional health of the child with diabetes, early detection and effective correction of risk factors for diabetic eye and kidney disease, proactive protection from cardiovascular disease are cardinal health objectives, each still requiring intensified effort.

Much has already been accomplished but even more remains to be done. At this meeting in Istanbul, we commit ourselves to the full achievement of the goals and objectives of the St Vincent Declaration. We call upon our governments, patient associations, professional organisations, voluntary social agencies and industrial companies to act together with renewed determination, setting locally achievable goals and targets but working towards common high standards of care. Urgent and decisive action is needed now.

*Unanimously adopted at the 10th Anniversary Meeting of
The St Vincent Declaration Diabetes Action Programme
Istanbul, Turkey, 9-12 October 1999*