

# IDF position statements: a call for *action*

✉ Anne Pierson

*The IDF Executive Office in Brussels is the focus of numerous requests for information about diabetes issues. These come from a range of sources, including the governments, industry, the media, Member Associations, and people with diabetes. The IDF staff and Officers are regularly asked to explain the position of the Federation with regards to subjects such as tobacco smoking or obesity. In some cases of discrimination, the office is contacted by people with diabetes or their representatives. Information produced or gathered by IDF is processed into press copy or reproduced to support diabetes campaigns. In order to ensure the diffusion of accurate and relevant data, IDF produces position statements which summarize and describe the Federation's view on a number of topics. Anne Pierson reports.*



IDF position statements are intended to serve as a reference source for any group or individual wishing to inform the public about a particular diabetes issue. IDF is the global reference for diabetes information; data which has been provided by the Federation adds a stamp of credibility to a presentation, TV or radio programme, or lecture about the condition.

#### **Tools in the press tool kit**

While the statements are prepared for consumption by the general public, the style and format used are chosen in order to favour the effective transmission of diabetes information to the media. A position statement can represent a potential tool for raising awareness of diabetes in the general public, and for advocacy on behalf of people with the condition and those at risk.

Many people with diabetes around the world still do not have access to the required medication, treatment and services required for optimal self-management at prices which they can reasonably afford. Furthermore, people with diabetes are often the victims of discrimination in the labour market, at the workplace, or at school. This can have a serious impact on quality of life. To a large extent, these problems arise from the poor level of awareness of the condition amongst the general public.

People with diabetes suffer discrimination and shortcomings in care due to poor public awareness of the condition.

#### **Where do they come from?**

In March 2003, the IDF Task Force on Position Statements was established. Their task was to identify and prioritize some of the most important issues facing people with diabetes. Position statements are written by experts invited to contribute by the Task Force. The statements are reviewed by members of the Task Force and ratified by a Sub-Committee of the IDF Board of

Management, which includes experts on diabetes education, diabetes medicine, and the law.

The statements are short, and easy to translate, with the content mainly restricted to IDF policy on a matter. The format of the position statements supports the editors and journalists by providing accurate and concise declarations. In this way, the interests of the diabetes community are also protected. As Stijn Deceukelier stated in a previous issue of this magazine, "bringing messages to the media is not difficult; the problems lie in ensuring the message is spread correctly" (*Diabetes Voice* 2003; 48(4): 44).

The format of the position statements supports the editors and journalists by providing accurate and concise declarations.

### Calls for action

Importantly, the IDF position statements reflect the commitment of IDF to optimizing contacts with the media, health decision makers and the general public in order to advocate improvements to policies on diabetes around the world. While they serve as vehicles for the expression of the views of the Federation, each of the position statements makes a call for action to be taken in response to the present situation. For example, the IDF position statement on tobacco use states that "tobacco control should be included in all health programmes at national, regional and international level".

The development and publication of IDF position statements is one of the

**Diabetes education** should be considered an integral part of diabetes prevention and care. Unfortunately this is not the case in many countries of the world where diabetes education is at best in its infancy or non-existent. The combination of lack of access to quality medical management and diabetes education leads to poor clinical outcomes, reduced quality of life and high health-related costs due to service utilization and the costs of treatment.

(IDF Task Force on Position Statements. *Diabetes Education: A Right for All*. Brussels: International Diabetes Federation, 2003)

**Tobacco** is harmful to health and is of particular danger to people with diabetes. All late complications of diabetes such as cardiovascular disease, foot problems, kidney and eye disease are worsened by smoking. Smoking cessation has immediate positive effects, however it is made difficult by tobacco dependence and by all forms of advertising and promotion used by the tobacco industry.

(IDF Task Force on Position Statements. *Diabetes and tobacco use: a harmful combination*. Brussels: International Diabetes Federation, 2003)

ongoing activities of the Federation. Four statements are available on the IDF website ([www.idf.org](http://www.idf.org)):

- ♦ *diabetes and kidney disease: the need for early diagnosis and treatment*
- ♦ *diabetes and tobacco use: a harmful combination*
- ♦ *diabetes and cardiovascular disease*
- ♦ *diabetes education: a right for all.*

Each position statement makes a call for action to be taken in response to the present situation.

Position statements are distributed to the media in connection with special events. The press contacts in the IDF database receive position statements and other communications on the occasion of special events in the diabetes calendar (official WHO days, World Diabetes Day, IDF events), or

upon request. Summaries of position statements are to be included in IDF publications such as *Diabetes Voice* or the electronic bulletin, *Newsflash*.

A number of other position statements are currently under review, including those on diabetes and sugar, and on discrimination at the work place. Others are scheduled to be drafted in the near future: access to insulin, human vs animal insulin, blood and urine testing, diabetes and obesity, diabetes costs. The list of topics still to be addressed is long and includes issues such as diabetes prevention, diabetes and the food industry, and the impact of alcohol on people with diabetes.

#### ☒ Anne Pierson

Anne Pierson is the IDF Public Relations manager.