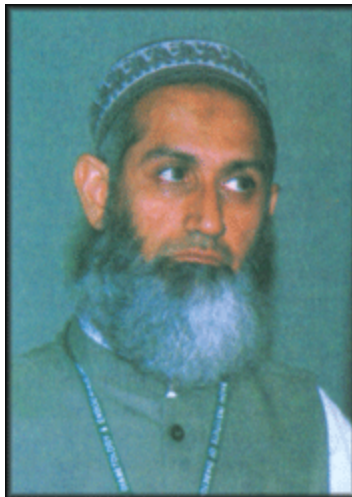


BIDE and Basit have revolutionized the diabetic foot care in Pakistan

Indigenous production of cost effective off loading devices, establishment of Foot Clinics and Visiting Dressers are unique concepts worth following by all less developed countries

By Shaukat Ali Jawaid

KARACHI: Baqai Institute of Diabetes and Endocrinology (BIDE) and its Director Prof. Abdul Basit a renowned diabetologist have revolutionized the diabetic foot care in Pakistan. The indigenous production of cost effective off loading devices, establishment of the first proper Foot Clinic, training of physicians in diabetes in a diploma course, and visiting dressers are some of the unique concepts worth following by all the less developed countries.



Prof. Abdul Basit

It will be worth mentioning that when Prof. Abdul Basit returned to Pakistan after training in UK, about ten years ago no one including myself took him seriously. However, it was the far sight of Prof. F.U.Baqai of Baqai Medical University who

reposed their full confidence in him and eventually agreed to establish yet another institution within the Baqai family which was named as Baqai Institute of Diabetes and Endocrinology. Prof. Abdul Basit was also lucky since Vice Chancellor of Baqai Medical University Lt. Gen. (Retd) S.Azhar Ahmad who is himself interested in diabetes and has done a lot of work in this field, helped and encouraged him approving all the development schemes put forward by Prof. Basit and his team. Their trust in Prof. Basit and his team paid rich dividends and now BIDE has successfully listed the name of Baqai and Pakistan in the world map of Diabetes with particular reference to Diabetic Foot care. Dedicated and devoted efforts of Prof. Abdul Basit and his team are now very much visible. BIDE under the dynamic leadership of Prof. Basit has established an academic research department. The researchers in the team have completed a large number of original studies which have been published in prestigious national and international peer reviewed medical journals while many more research studies are underway. Prof. Basit encourages every one at BIDE to get involved in some research project. Unlike most Pakistanis who believe in solo flight and self projection, Prof. Abdul Basit believes in team work and that is the secret of his success. You go to any diabetes meeting and most often the speakers start their presentation with the first slide which has the name and affiliations of the speaker but in case of Prof. Basit, it is his last slide which contains his name along with a long list of members of the team which has participated in that particular research project. This is something which distinguishes Prof. Basit from other Pakistani diabetologists.

Diabetes has been here in Pakistan and diabetologists have been successfully treating the diabetics but no one gave a serious thought to diabetic foot care. It was Prof. Abdul Basit who took diabetic foot care seriously. Now they have five trained dressers in Karachi who visit the patients suffering from diabetic foot ulcers who need dressing. BIDE provides the dressing bag while the dressers who have their own conveyance charge from Rs.250-350 depending on the distance for a dressing and this amount is shared on fifty fifty basis between the dresser and the BIDE. BIDE has also trained five more dressers who are working in Lahore, Quetta, Peshawar, Dera Ghazi Khan and Gujranwala. They are affiliated with doctors practicing there who have been trained at BIDE and got a Diploma in Diabetes. This is very convenient and economical for the patients who do not have to visit BIDE for dressing of foot ulcers.

On the contrary in the developed world, Diabetic Foot was recognized as an important sub-specialty of diabetes many years ago. It was in the end of 1980s that diabetologists interested in diabetic foot care started meeting in UK and in 1990 a big meeting on diabetic foot was held in Holland. Eventually in 1999 International Working Group on Diabetic Foot (IWGDF) was established with twenty five members from twenty five countries. Now eighty six countries from all over the world including Pakistan are represented in this group. However, until 2006 this International Working Group on Diabetic Foot had no representation from Pakistan. When I asked Prof. Karel Bakker Chairman of IWGDF why there is no representation in this from Pakistan, he replied that "Now I know whom to invite. I will invite Prof. Abdul Basit to represent Pakistan on this group. I am happy to see such a knowledgeable, flexible charming person who is so active in this field. We realized it only last week".

Prof. Abdul Basit joined the IWGDF and also became chairperson of Pakistani Working Group on Diabetic Foot. Since then, he has never looked back and moved forward with a fast pace. The BIDE which has already trained one hundred fifty six doctors with diploma in diabetes are now serving all over the country. He established the first Diabetic Foot Clinic in Pakistan at BIDE which provides comprehensive diabetic foot care. BIDE data shows 59% healing of foot ulcers at its tertiary foot care center which has gone a long way in drastically reducing the amputation rate. In fact they now claim to have the least amputation rate.

Prof. Basit believes that at present it is estimated that there are four to five thousand diabetics with foot ulcers in Pakistan and the treatment cost is very prohibitive. The monthly treatment cost of Diabetic Foot is about Rs. 7,800/- per month while direct treatment cost per month is over three thousand rupees. Then he came up with the idea of indigenous production of cost effective off loading devices. What is more important to note is that he does not hesitate to admit that he learnt it from leprosy centre rather than claiming that it was his own concept. This is yet another example of humbleness of this kind hearted, practical Muslim diabetologist contrary to most Pakistanis who are always keen to take credit for everything irrespective of the fact whether they deserve it or not, instead of acknowledging others for their innovation and contributions. So far he has succeeded in establishing two Diabetic Foot Clinics in Pakistan and during the next few years he aims at setting up one hundred Diabetic Foot Clinics all over the country.

By presenting his original research data at international forums, he has succeeded in getting financial grant for starting diabetes educator's course. The participants of the course in the next three years will be trained absolutely free and they won't have to pay anything. He plans to start a six weeks Diabetic Foot Care Assistant Course as well.

As is well known treating diabetic foot ulcers is very costly. It is extremely difficult for the patients to visit frequently for dressings of foot ulcers and follow up visits. Here Prof. Basit and his team at BIDE came up with an innovative idea of starting a service of "Visiting dressers". In a big city like Karachi, transport is a major problem. Patients with diabetic foot ulcers have to spend a lot to come to the centre for dressing and follow up visits. With the start of this unique service, the trained and experienced dressers visit different areas of the city on fix days and provide dressing for foot ulcers at the home of the patients who are charged a very nominal fee. This not only ensures good diabetic foot care and appropriate dressings of foot ulcers but also saves lot of time and money of the patients. This experiment has been a great success and now even Dow University of Health Sciences and some other institutions have shown interest in sending their Dressers for training at BIDE. This in itself says a lot about the success story of Baqai Institute of Diabetes and Endocrinology of which Prof. F.U. Baqai and the whole Baqai Medical University management should be proud of.

Collaboration programme with World Diabetes Foundation

In collaboration with World Diabetes Foundation, BIDE has now embarked upon a National Diabetes and Diabetic Foot Programme in the country. This project has been launched to create awareness regarding diabetes, to initiate the prevention of diabetes and to improve the diabetes care and the diabetic foot care in Pakistan. The project aims to improve the existing status of diabetes care, diabetes prevention and diabetic foot care in a developing country like Pakistan, through educational and awareness strategies and through provision of training to medical and allied professionals

The initiative is directed at the lay public and people with diabetes, through provision of diabetes education, education on foot and creation of awareness besides improving health care delivery through training of health care professionals such as doctors, paramedics, podiatrists and diabetes educators.

The salient constituents of the project are:

1. Diploma in Diabetology- one year full time course for doctors.
2. Diploma in Diabetes Education (Diabetes Educator Course) – One year course for non-physicians.
3. Certified Podiatry Course - six weeks full time course for allied health professionals
4. Establishment of Diabetic Foot Care Clinics – A nationwide network of foot clinics to be established within three years.
5. Three days CMEs on diabetes.
6. Courses for Foot Care Teams – Each team consisting of a doctor and a nurse or paramedic - A basic course and an advanced course.
7. One day Diabetic Foot Learning Programmes (CMEs)
8. One day training Programme on insulin therapy.
9. Public Awareness Programmes.
10. Children Awareness Programmes.
11. Preparation and distribution of Specialized Educational Material.

After the completion of this project it is expected that:

- Doctors/Family Physicians will be trained in the specialized diabetes care.
- Diabetes educators will be trained to become important member of multidisciplinary diabetes care team.
- People with diabetes and their families are educated in the self management.
- Children & adolescent are educated regarding a healthy life-style and a healthy diet
- Podiatrists from across the country are trained.
- Foot care teams (each team consisting of a doctor and a nurse) are trained.
- Reduction in the number of amputations.
- Nationwide network of diabetic foot clinics is established.
- Hundreds of legs saved.

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