

# MEAFCS Mini Workshops and Poster Presentations 2009

## **Diabetes Education and Support Group**

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**Type of Presentation Preference: Mini-Workshop**

1. **Program Title:** Diabetes Education and Support Group  
**FCS Focus Area:** Food and Nutrition
2. **Issue and Situation:** One way to describe the issue of diabetes is to review the statistics. Following are statistics from the National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse: “Prevalence of Diagnosed and Undiagnosed Diabetes among People Ages 20 Years or Older, United States, 2007

**Age 20 years or older:** 23.5 million, or 10.7 percent, of all people in this age group have diabetes.

**Age 60 years or older:** 12.2 million, or 23.1 percent, of all people in this age group have diabetes.

- Diabetes was the seventh leading cause of death listed on U.S. death certificates in 2006. This ranking is based on the 72,507 death certificates in 2006 in which diabetes was listed as the underlying cause of death. According to death certificate reports, diabetes contributed to a total of 233,619 deaths in 2005, the latest year for which data on contributing causes of death are available.
- Diabetes is likely to be underreported as a cause of death. Studies have found that only about 35 to 40 percent of decedents with diabetes had it listed anywhere on the death certificate randomly about 10 to 15 percent had it listed as the underlying cause of death.
- Overall, the risk for death among people with diabetes is about twice that of people without diabetes of similar age.”

Additionally, complications of diabetes include heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, blindness, kidney disease, nervous system disease, dental disease and pregnancy complications.

Proper glucose control and other preventive care measures can greatly increase the quality of life and reduce the complications of diabetes.

Diabetes, while medically treated, is often described as a 24/7 self-care disease. In our rural Montana communities, it can be challenging to find resources to learn how to incorporate a variety of self-care techniques, from cooking and food planning, to understanding lab test results and latest research.

3. **Stakeholders and Input:** The process used for input on program development was simplicity at its finest. In November, while I (agent) was in the middle of brainstorming program ideas for the upcoming year with office staff, a client walked in and asked if I had ever done any classes on diabetes. He was struggling to get his diabetes under control and was looking for local resources. I took down his contact information and said it was good timing for him to offer a suggestion for classes, considering that we were just conferencing about community needs.

I contacted the local physician and she felt it would be a good idea. I worked with Lynn Paul, MSU Food and Nutrition Specialist, to get more information. After mulling over

the format and process for some time, I scheduled a four-week series. I taught two of the classes and arranged for two guest speakers – a physician and a registered dietitian with an emphasis in diabetes management.

The series was listed in three local newspapers. Flyers were also created and posted at clinics in the area. A person who read of the class in the Independent Observer in Conrad called to ask for extra copies of the flyers and took them to pharmacies in that town, so I did the same in Choteau and Fairfield. Interestingly, when the class was asked how they learned about the class, a substantial group had seen the flyers at the pharmacies.

4. **Program Description:** The following is from the press release in the newspapers:

On March 18, a four-part series on diabetes will be held at the Alice Gleason Room of the Choteau Public Library. The series will be on Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:30 p.m. on March 18, 25 and April 1 and 8. The workshops are free to the public, but a registration by March 13 is requested. To register, call 466-2491.

The series of classes will include a presentation from Dr. Laura Shelton, a local physician. Dr. Shelton will talk about disease management, signs and symptoms, blood sugar monitoring, meters and more. Natalie Bucher, a registered dietitian and diabetes educator for the Great Falls Clinic will be presenting on the reasons and importance of meal planning for optimal glucose control and weight management. She will also speak on many other aspects of nutrition related to disease management.

The series will also include Extension materials related to diabetes management. There will be opportunity for sharing of resources from class participants and a tour of helpful websites.

As a bonus introduction to the diabetes series, the “Becoming a C.O.N. (covert and overt nutrition) Artist” class will be offered on March 11 at 6:30 p.m. also at the Choteau Library. This is a class that I have developed based on sneaky nutrition ideas. The class lasts 90 minutes and includes a taste-testing buffet of foods with bolstered nutrition and ways you can sneak healthier foods into your diet. A registration for the C.O.N. Artist class is also requested so that enough materials and food can be prepared. To register for this free class, call 466-2491.

**5. Program Impact:** Part of my long range vision when establishing the series was to help the group become a self-sustaining support group, independent of the extension agent. I told them that at the end of four weeks, I would be asking them to consider whether or not they would want to continue their education group as a “support” group of sorts in our county. As an extension agent, I would then play a minimal role in how that group functioned. I purposefully structured activities that allowed the participants to cultivate relationships with one another.

While no formal evaluation has been completed for this series to date, several informal contacts with participants have provided favorable feedback and indicate positive impacts on lifestyle

adaptations for dealing with diabetes. As the series continued, the group used suggestions from Extension for guest speakers, including an optometrist and a registered nurse with emphasis on alternative medicine. Also, the group arranged with a local lab for free A1C blood tests.

One participant reported being very appreciative of receiving meeting notices by e-mail and others have contacted the extension office to receive such notices, which are also posted on the web and in the local newspapers.

However, I believe the single most revealing aspect about the impact of this program is that the group still meets on a consistent and regular basis, is self-sustaining and has added new members.