

## Transitioning patients with type 1 diabetes from pediatric to adult endocrinology

*The Transition Care Program at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh (Preparing You For Transition or PREP U)*

**Marilyn Clougherty, RN, MSN, CDE**

Tandem Diabetes

Children's Hospital works to prepare the youth that have grown up with diabetes in a pediatric setting for the adult world. Supported by the David Paul Diabetes Transition Care Research Initiative Fund, the goal of their transition program is to equip adolescents and young adults with diabetes with confidence, knowledge, and support that can foster successful lifelong disease management. It aims to provide the best care, and find, through research initiatives, the best ways to support and guide a successful transition for young patients and their parents. The program utilizes a multidisciplinary team approach involving

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## The Greater Pittsburgh Diabetes Club

*What is it?*

**Jennifer Pennock, MD**

Allegheny Health Network

The Greater Pittsburgh Diabetes Club (GPDC) is a group of multidisciplinary clinicians who have a special interest in diabetes. The Greater Pittsburgh Diabetes Club provides a venue for non-biased specialty level educational programs, networking, and social interaction.

The GPDC offers the venue to hear invited speakers, obtain continuing education credits, and promote networking with local friends and colleagues.

The GPDC is made possible by the Allegheny County Medical Society which provides the administrative support, venue location, and structure for the club.

Members of the GPDC are residents of the Greater Pittsburgh / Southwestern Pennsylvania area who are actively engaged in diabetes research, the teaching of diabetes care, and/or the practice of endocrinology. Membership to the GPDC is open to Adult and Pediatric endocrinologists (MDs and DOs), NPs, PAs who specialize in endocrine and/or diabetes care; Pharmacists, Dietitians, Nurses who specialize in endocrine and/or diabetes care; and other clinical health professionals with a special interest in diabetes. In addition, fellows in the field of endocrinology and metabolism are members, free from dues.

The GPDC has two dinner programs per year with appropriate CME and CEU credits applied. The dinner programs are free for members.

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physicians, nurse practitioners, educators, dietitians, psychologists, and consultants. I had the pleasure of helping to develop the educational modules when the program was still in its infancy. It continues to evolve with an excellent team of experts leading it to succeed.

The program is designed to be four educational sessions. The adolescent or young adult is to come to clinic on specific days which include an independent visit with their health care provider and an educational group meeting with others also going through the program. The group discussions focus on issues relevant to this life period within the context of diabetes: prevention of complications, reproductive health, technology, healthy eating, and high risk behaviors. Moderators utilize evidence-based approaches and strategies to encourage youth to become increasingly engaged in making informed decisions about their diabetes care. Program participants also learn to use tools like the patient portal and resources that directly connect them to adult care services to help prepare them and their families for a smooth transition to adult care services. By meeting with the same group of peers every three months, the intention is that patients serve as their own support group.

The groups are made to be interactive according to Jessica McKevitt, RN, CDE who is the educator who co-leads the group sessions. Moderators with extensive experience in the area of diabetes assist in leading the groups such as Drs. Denise Charron Prochownik and Andrea Fischl, professors from the University of Pittsburgh who have done extensive research regarding reproductive health in young adults with diabetes, as well as Drs. Linda Siminerio and Jodi Krall who actively engage the youth in the discussion on high risk behaviors and diabetes. Dr. Ingrid Libman is the Pediatric Endocrinologist who directs the program and clearly states that the need was there. The feedback has been very positive. However, she admits that the program also has its challenges. Some youth miss appointments due to work or school

commitments and in some occasions, do not want to leave the program even if they have completed all the teaching sessions. "They end up staying in the program beyond the 4 sessions." Some try adult care and come back stating they did not like it! Many stay because they go away to school but are home in the summer and winter break therefore, they are not really established anywhere else. We often end up seeing patients this age group in emergent situations. They are out of prescriptions or diabetes supplies because they have missed appointments so they come back because no one else can see them for months as a new patient. These are some of the challenges but there are also great successes. Kids that go through the program, show growth in independence and knowledge. These are the ones that often come back, but next time they return to Children's as part of our medical staff!

Efforts are under way to increase the scope of services provided through the Diabetes Transition Program. These include running parallel sessions for parents so that they can learn about transition from their child's perspective and developing web-based interactive lessons to serve as adjuncts to face-to-face sessions. Telehealth is also being explored as a way to stay connected between clinic visits with patients.

Now that you know about our local experience, come and hear how other Children's Hospitals develop their transition program at our May 16th program. Dr. Shivani Agarwal is the Director of the Transition Clinic at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City.

## **TrialNet Pathway to Prevention**

Children's Hospital Of Pittsburgh is one of the sites for the international TrialNet study to prevent type 1 diabetes. The TrialNet Pathway to Prevention screening is the first step for all TrialNet prevention studies.

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Screening is offered free to relatives of people with

# The Greater Pittsburgh Diabetes Club

T1D to evaluate their personal risk of developing the disease. This unique screening can identify the early stages of T1D years before diagnosis. The GPDC Captain's Club is a membership organization that provides a variety of services to members and their families. The GPDC Captain's Club is a membership organization that provides a variety of services to members and their families. The GPDC Captain's Club is a membership organization that provides a variety of services to members and their families.

- Relatives of people with T1D are 15 times more likely to develop T1D than the general population with type 1 diabetes to attend the ADA Camp Courage in the Laurel Highlands of southwestern Pennsylvania (about 65 miles south of Pittsburgh). Camp Courage gives the life-changing experience of summer camp to children living with diabetes.
- The JDRF, ADA and Endocrine Society now classify having two or more of these autoantibodies as early stage T1D.

In addition, if a participant's screening results show that they are in the early stages of T1D (Stage 1 or Stage 2), they may be able to participate in a preventive study. These studies are looking for ways to slow down or stop the disease.

## THE GPDC

The current preventive study is testing the drug hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) to see if it can delay or prevent early stage T1D (stage 1) from progressing to abnormal glucose tolerance (stage 2) and ultimately prevent clinical diagnosis (stage 3). HCQ is already used to reduce symptoms and progression of other autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus. This is the first study to see if it can prevent or delay T1D.

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Please contact the GPDC if you would like to contribute an article to the GPDC Newsletter.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### SPRING 2019 PROGRAM – MAY 16



SHIVANI AGARWAL, MD, MPH: “TRANSITION FROM PEDIATRIC TO ADULT CARE FOR TYPE 1 DIABETES: THE GOOD THE BAD, AND THE UGLY”

### FALL 2019 PROGRAM – OCTOBER 29



RALPH A. DeFRONZO, MD: “TREATMENT OF T2DM: A SOUND APPROACH BASED UPON ITS PATHOPHYSIOLOGY”

MARK YOUR CALENDAR  
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2019  
Rivers Casino, Pittsburgh, PA

## \*MPHC 2019

Enhance your practice  
Details and Registration  
[www.acms.org/mphc2019](http://www.acms.org/mphc2019)

MPHC 2019 is the premier educational event for medical practice administrators and their office personnel. The gathering provides the opportunity to discuss the challenges facing medicine and to leave with innovative strategies to improve practices.

\*Management Professionals in Health Care

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