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**Conversations around a map to support people with diabetes fasting during Ramadan**

*Conversation Maps supported by Lilly help medical professionals raise awareness among their patients on how to fast safely and avoid potential complications*

Johannesburg, May 2015- Muslims observe the holy month of Ramadan by abstaining from food, drink and oral medications from dawn to dusk. Although the Qur’an specifically exempts people with a medical condition from the duty of fasting, many diabetics still choose to fast. According to the EPIDIAR Study Group: A Population-based Study of Diabetes and its Characteristics During the Fasting Month of Ramadan which was conducted in 13 Countries, it is estimated that 40-50 million people with diabetes, worldwide, will fast during Ramadan, which starts this year on June 18 (subject to the sighting of the new moon).

“Fasting presents significant challenges for diabetics in terms of managing blood sugar levels, which is why diabetic persons should consult with their doctor prior to the holy month of Ramadan to find out if they can fast and if so, plan a way to do it safely,” says Dr Aneesa Sheik, Medical Director of Lilly South Africa.

The lack of food and water during the day, along with a heavy evening meal, can create serious health issues for people living with diabetes, as they are faced with major disruptions to their diet and daily routines, which may lead to serious complications among which are low or high blood sugar levels. Studies have shown that there is an increased risk of severe low blood sugar levels for individuals with type 1 or type 2 diabetes, especially for those who change the dosages of their oral medications or insulin1, 2.

Blood sugar level that is too low and left untreated can cause confusion, clumsiness, or fainting, and in the case of severe low blood sugar, can lead to seizures, coma, and even death. A high blood sugar level can damage blood vessels, and over a long period of time can result in serious complications, including irreversible organ damage.

Dr MAK Omar, an independent medical professional: “Finding the right tools and resources, including time and personnel to educate patients and encourage them to discuss a treatment plan for fasting during Ramadan with their doctor is still a major challenge for healthcare professionals. Many of my patients have undertaken such an exercise. They have found it very useful in managing their diabetes during the Ramadan fast. The Conversation Map has certainly given them much more confidence.”

A “Conversation Map” tool, specific to “Managing Diabetes during Ramadan” has been launched in 2013 and used across the country and beyond. The tool, supported by Lilly, was created by Healthy Interactions, in collaboration with the International Diabetes Federation (IDF). It has been used in more than forty countries and translated into more than thirty languages.

According to Lilly’s Dr. Sheik, the tool represents an innovative approach to educate patients through conversations facilitated by IDF certified health experts. The map is created specifically for people with diabetes who choose to fast during Ramadan. It helps doctors and nurses guide their patients on how to daily manage diabetes, understand myths and facts about diabetes, the major complications to watch out for during fasting and the important habits to maintain while fasting.

Healthcare professionals who would like to use the Conversation Map tools for patient group consultations can contact Lilly South Africa on 011 510 9300, for more information.

*1. DCCT Research Group. N Engl J Med 1993;329(14):977-86***.**

*2. Salti et al. Diabetes Care 2004;27(10):2306-11*

**Upcoming Ramadan Conversation Maps public events:**

**Cape Town:**

6 June: Victoria Rd Mosque, Grassy Park, Cape Town at 13h45

**KZN**

6 June: Al Ameen Masjid Hall, Montsford, Chatsworth, Durban at 14h00

Diabetics who would like to attend a Conversation Map session with a healthcare practitioner in KZN to ensure better management of their diabetes during Ramadan can also SMS Shubnum Haniff-Ismailat Lilly on 084 305 0387, and include your suburb details. You’ll be forwarded details of the educational sessions closest to you.

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**Note to media:** If you would like to arrange for interviews on this subject matter, please contact Anne or Teresa on (011) 894 2767 or e-mail anne@tscommunications.co.za to make the necessary arrangements.

**About Lilly South Africa**

Lilly is a global healthcare leader that unites caring with discovery to make life better for people around the world. We were founded more than a century ago by a man committed to creating high-quality medicines that meet real needs, and today we remain true to that mission in all our work. Lilly has been a global leader in diabetes care since 1923, when we introduced the world's first commercial insulin.

Across the globe, Lilly employees work to discover and bring life-changing medicines to those who need them, improve the understanding and management of disease, and give back to communities through philanthropy and volunteerism.

To learn more about Lilly South Africa, please visit us at [www.lilly.co.za](http://www.lilly.co.za)

**About the Diabetes Conversation Map***™* **tool**

Since its launch in 2008, the Diabetes *Conversation Map™* tool has become a meaningful addition to the diabetes patient education process. This small group education approach allows people with diabetes to learn more on how to manage their diabetes better on their own, based on their physician’s guidance.

Created by Healthy Interactions, a global leader in health education, in collaboration with the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), and with the support of Lilly Diabetes the unique *Conversation Map™* education tool has been introduced in over 41 countries, and made available in 35 languages since then with seven *Conversation Maps* ™ covering various topics for patients.

Designed for use in small groups of 3 to10 patients, the *Conversation Map™* tool provides an engaging 91.44 cm x 152.4 cm (three-foot by five-foot) table-top visual and stimulating questions that foster a real-world dialogue between people with diabetes and healthcare professionals. The tool offers a distinct contrast to traditional methods of diabetes education with a dynamic, small group, discovery-learning experience that is unlike any other known education experience and is designed to lead to better understanding of diabetes.

The content of the Diabetes *Conversation Map™* tool has been developed by IDF chosen subject matter experts to be of high quality and relevance.

The *Conversation Map™*  tool specifically target topics identified as most critical for supporting successful diabetes self-management, including:

* + Living with Diabetes
	+ How Diabetes Works
	+ Healthy Eating and Keeping Active
	+ Starting Insulin Treatment
	+ Diabetes and Caring for Your Feet
	+ Understanding the Many Factors of Managing Diabetes
	+ Living in a Family with Type 1 Diabetes
	+ Managing Diabetes During Ramadan