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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **World Diabetes Day 2005**

#### **World Diabetes Day 2005 – Put Feet First Prevent Amputations**

London, United Kingdom. 9 November 2005 – The **International Insulin Foundation** (IIF) would like to draw attention to the plight of people, especially children, in the developing world with insulin-requiring diabetes. The Foundation's work has shown that it is possible to improve services for patients with this disease so that treatment for survival is possible, even in the world's poorest countries.

#### **IIF's statement for World Diabetes Day 2005**

The official theme of World Diabetes Day 2005 is the prevention of amputations by promoting better foot care. Somewhere in the world, a leg is lost to diabetes every thirty seconds (International Diabetes Federation). Amputations for people with diabetes are the result of a long chain of events. The first of these is poor management of this condition. In many countries in the developing world this poor management is due to lack of access to insulin, medicines, trained healthcare workers and the appropriate infrastructure.

The main cause of amputations is foot ulcers. These develop as people with diabetes lose feeling in their extremities (neuropathy), due to poor disease management. These ulcers often get infected and if they are not treated properly and speedily can lead to amputations. People with diabetes also need to pay special attention to wounds, as they are more prone to infection.

The IIF would like to bring to people's attention that while foot care is an essential piece of the overall treatment for people with diabetes, ensuring that people can access affordable medicines and care, trained health workers and the appropriate infrastructure is vital to prevent complications of diabetes such as neuropathy.

#### **The IIF's accomplishments**

The IIF has carried out three in-country assessments in Mali, Mozambique and Zambia. From this work it has produced three country specific reports that are being used as guidelines in these three countries to implement changes to different areas of their health system to improve diabetes care. From these three reports the IIF has prepared a comparative report highlighting the many factors impact the proper access to care for patients in developing countries.

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These are:

- Problems with supplies (insulin, syringes, testing materials, etc.)
- Cost of treatment (direct: cost of insulin and supplies, consultations, laboratory tests, etc. indirect: travel costs, lost time from work or school, etc.)
- Lack of infrastructure within health facilities especially with regards to diagnosis
- Lack of appropriate training with regards to treating patients with diabetes
- Importance of traditional beliefs

This situation combined with health systems overburdened with HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria leads to extremely low life expectancies for people, especially children, with Type 1 diabetes in developing countries. The impact on life expectancy is even higher in rural areas than in urban areas due to difficulties accessing health facilities in rural areas.

The IIF is currently preparing a document to serve as a guide for countries in sub-Saharan Africa interested in implementing national diabetes programmes.

### **What is diabetes?**

November 14<sup>th</sup> 2005 marks the sixteenth annual World Diabetes Day. Diabetes is a chronic condition that affects people of all ages in all areas of the world. Inadequate care can lead to serious health complications such as blindness, kidney failure, neuropathy (degeneration of nerves and nervous system), amputation, heart attacks and death. November 14<sup>th</sup> was chosen as World Diabetes Day as it is Frederick Banting's birthday. Together with Charles Best, Dr. Banting discovered insulin in October 1921.

Type 1 diabetes is caused by the destruction of insulin producing cells in the pancreas. Insulin is vital for the survival of patients suffering from Type 1 diabetes and must be administered daily throughout the life of the patient. The International Diabetes Federation estimates that there are 5.3 million people world-wide who suffer from Type 1 diabetes, and thus require insulin every day. Worldwide there is an increase in Type 2 diabetes, due to the parallel increase in obesity and sedentary behaviour.

The first patient to be treated with insulin was a Canadian child by the name of Leonard Thompson in 1922. Over 80 years after the first patient received this life saving treatment many people with diabetes in the developing world still have difficulties accessing insulin. This leads to a life expectancy, which can be as low as 12 months for a child in rural sub-Saharan Africa compared to over 50-60 years for a child diagnosed in Europe.

The establishment of the IIF, by leading academics and physicians in the field of diabetes, as a concerted effort to improve the prospects for Type 1 diabetic patients in the world's poorest countries. The IIF was established with the aim of prolonging the life and promoting the health of people with diabetes in developing countries by improving the supply of insulin and education in its use.

In order to achieve these objectives, a clear analysis of the constraints to insulin access and diabetes care is needed. The IIF's view is that increasing the supply of insulin through donations or other means is not sustainable and that the root of the problem is what needs to be solved.

### **If you would like information about the IIF and its work please contact:**

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