

Watsons, NUS pharmacy dept help diabetes patients manage the chronic disease

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SINGAPORE- Diabetics patients, many of whom struggle to manage their condition, have a new one-stop platform to help them do so.

Pharmacy chain Watsons Singapore and the National University of Singapore pharmacy department launched a new Diabetes Care programme on Wednesday (May 3), to encourage higher patient compliance in the management of the chronic disease.

For \$60, patients can receive at Watsons a monthly testing kit as well as eight consultations with pharmacists over 12 months to help manage their condition. Patients can get a 10 per cent discount if they have a referral by a doctor.

The consultations, which will take place at Watsons outlets at United Square, Raffles City and Tiong Bahru Plaza, will focus on a patient's compliance, response to medications, lifestyle, techniques of self-monitoring of blood glucose, insulin administration, control of diabetes and concomitant diseases. The length of each consultation will vary depending on the patient's needs and will aim at improving a patient's confidence in managing his or her disease.

Currently, over 400,000 Singaporeans have diabetes, with one in three likely to get it in their lifetime. Among those diagnosed, one in three have poor control of their condition. They miss their medication and have poor diets due to hectic lifestyles and poor self-discipline.

Mr Victor Jabhraj, 57, a human resource manager, has had diabetes for 10 years and he says that it boils down simply to his lifestyle. "My medication can usually only be taken after breakfast and I have my breakfast in the car on the way to work. By the time I can take my medication, I'm usually swamped with work and I simply forget." He went on to add that as a diabetic, food choices are often limited and that makes eating right very difficult.

This is where the Diabetes Care programme hopes to come in. Pharmacists are trained to be able to provide individualised services to each of their patients. They will work with them on lifestyle choices to help them remember to take their medication. They are also trained in nutritional needs so they can help a diabetic better manage their diet. The idea is to encourage self-empowerment so that patients can take better care of themselves.

To keep track of a patient's diabetes management plan, Watsons pharmacists will be using Health Assist which is a web-based health application technology that is specially designed to assist community pharmacists in chronic disease management. Health Assist will allow pharmacists to conduct consultations in a more structured manner.

Currently, the first 100 patients to sign up for the Diabetes Care programme will get free glucose meters, test strips and lancets.

Mr Dominic Wong, general manager of Watsons Singapore, said, "Through the Diabetes Care programme, Watsons hopes to work closely with other healthcare partners to achieve a higher compliance rate with patients where pharmacists can play a greater role in chronic disease management.

"This launch marks our plan to drive awareness on diabetes management and prevention through a 360-approach combining online and offline channels to reach out to our customers."