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Lilly 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 of diabetes

[March 2018] – As the holy month of Ramadan draws closer, it is estimated that 40-50 million people with diabetes worldwide will fast during Ramadan¹, which starts this year on 15 May 2018, subject to the sighting of the new moon, to 14 June 2018.

Muslims observe the holy month of Ramadan by abstaining from food, drink and oral medications from dawn to dusk. Given its significance in Islamic faith, not being able to fast due to a health condition can be devastating. Although the Qur'an specifically exempts people with a medical condition from the duty of fasting, many people living with diabetes still choose to fast despite the health risks.

"Fasting presents significant challenges for people living with diabetes in terms of managing blood sugar levels, which is why it's essential to consult with their doctor well in advance of the holy month of Ramadan to find out if they can fast and if so, plan a way to do it safely," explains Dr Aneesa Sheik, Medical Director of Lilly South Africa.

"The lack of food and water during the day, along with the heavy meals eaten before and after fasting at suhoor and ifthar can create serious health issues for people living with diabetes, as they are faced with major disruptions to their diet and daily routines. This can 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 insulin^{2,3}.

"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. In general, fasting is very challenging for people living with diabetes, particularly patients with type 1 diabetes, who are dependent on insulin.

"If you have type 1 diabetes your doctor will want to ensure that your blood sugar is regularly monitored to prevent any health risks, and may even need to adjust insulin doses according to your food intake and activity. Fasting with type 2 diabetes can also be risky, especially if you have poorly controlled diabetes. It is important to



remember that your prescribed medication may also influence your ability to fast. Muslims with diabetes who wish to fast must plan diligently and well in advance for a safe and healthy Ramadan,” explains Dr Sheik.

Providing healthcare professionals with the right tools and resources, including time and personnel to educate patients and encourage them to discuss a treatment plan for fasting during Ramadan has been a key focus area for Lilly.

The “Lilly Diabetes Conversation Map” tool, specific to “Managing Diabetes during Ramadan” was launched in 2013 and is used across the country and beyond. The Lilly Diabetes Conversation Map tool was created by Healthy Interactions. It has been used in more than forty countries and translated into more than thirty languages. It helps doctors and nurses guide their patients on how to manage diabetes during the month of Ramadan, 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 Lilly Diabetes Conversation Map tools for patient group consultations can contact Lilly on 011 510 9300 for more information.

References:

1. EPIDIAR Study Group: *A Population-based Study of Diabetes and its Characteristics During the Fasting Month of Ramadan*
2. DCCT Research Group. *N Engl J Med* 1993;329(14):977-86.
3. Salti et al. *Diabetes Care* 2004;27(10):2306-11

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

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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