

UCLA opens diabetes center in Santa Monica



The Gonda Diabetes Center in Santa Monica is now open to improve access and quality of care for individuals with diabetes. Along with the Gonda Diabetes Center in Westwood, the new Santa Monica office is dedicated exclusively to the care and education of adults with type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes and gestational mellitus diabetes. The office serves as a convenient, one-stop center for patients' medical and educational needs.

In recent years, healthcare experts have called for a rethinking of diabetes management as the number of Americans with diabetes, prediabetes (metabolic syndrome) and gestational diabetes soars. In a study released in 2016 on the diabetes incidence in California, the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research found rates have increased by 35 percent since 2001. While 2.5 million adults have already been diagnosed with diabetes, an estimated 13 million people — 46 percent of the state's population — have prediabetes or undiagnosed diabetes. One out of every three young adults in the state has either prediabetes or undiagnosed diabetes. Up to 30 percent of those with prediabetes will develop type 2 diabetes within five years, and as many as 70 percent of them will develop the disease in their lifetime. The prevalence of gestational diabetes in the United States is unknown, but may be as high as 9.2 percent according to a 2014 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A diagnosis of gestational diabetes increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes later in life.

Personalized care improves outcomes

The primary objective of the Gonda Diabetes Center in Santa Monica is to provide personalized care to patients with diabetes, says Matthew Freeby, MD, assistant clinical professor and director of UCLA's diabetes centers in Westwood and Santa Monica.

"We feel that the ability to focus exclusively on diabetes will help us provide a better and more personalized approach to patient care," he says. "We are a group of physicians and educators who are focused on diabetes on a daily basis. We have greater communication with our patients."

Patient education sets a foundation for good outcomes. Dr. Freeby says, "I'm a huge believer in diabetes education. We really try to help our patients better understand the disease process."

Patients can become overwhelmed by the demands of managing the disease. But support and knowledge eases the burden. "Patients are having to think about the impact of medications, food, exercise and stress on diabetes care every day and, in some cases, every hour. We help them deal with burnout, improve self-care and manage their disease," he notes.

Diabetes is associated with dramatically increased risk of amputation, nerve damage, blindness, kidney disease, heart disease, hospitalization and premature death.

Empowering the patient

Diabetes care today has shifted to a patient-centered model in which individuals are taught how to manage the disease on a daily basis with support from physicians, nurse educators and registered dietitians. This approach is reflected in a position paper released in 2014 by the American Association of Diabetes Educators describing patient-centered diabetes care and self-management education. Studies show that patient education is one of the most important aspects of treatment. Research conducted at UCLA indicates that patient education lowers the risk of complications and co-morbidities and improves outcomes.

The Gonda Diabetes Center in Santa Monica offers a full complement of workshops, classes and counseling aimed at disease management, lowering A1C levels and preventing long-term complications of the disease. Self-management education focuses on healthy eating, activity, blood-sugar monitoring, medication management, problem-solving, coping with the disease and reducing the risk of complications. Educating patients with pre-diabetes can help prevent onset of the disease.

Patient education at the Gonda Diabetes Center in Santa Monica consists of individual counseling or day-long workshops for groups of up to 10 patients. The group format fosters the social support that, research shows, improves patient adherence and coping skills. Patients are encouraged to bring a family member or support person. The workshops are held four times a month.

Support across medical specialties

The center's staff is composed of endocrinologists, registered nurses, a nurse-practitioner and a registered dietitian. Referring physicians can request consultations for particularly challenging cases or to assist with patient education. Patients can opt for ongoing care with an endocrinologist at the center. Patients with other co-morbidities or complications are referred to ophthalmologists, nephrologists, obstetricians, bariatric surgeons, cardiologists, vascular specialists and other specialists at UCLA.

Participating Medical Team

Matthew Freeby, MD

Assistant Clinical Professor of Endocrinology
Associate Director, Diabetes Clinical Programs
Director, Gonda (Goldschmied) Diabetes Centers in Westwood and Santa Monica

David Ahn, MD

Clinical Instructor of Endocrinology

Susan Davis, MD

Assistant Clinical Professor of Endocrinology

Vikram Kamdar, MD

Associate Clinical Professor of Endocrinology

Janet Winikoff, MD

Assistant Clinical Professor of Endocrinology

Mary Rose Deraco Sosa, RN

Administrative Nurse

Evelyne Fleury-Milfort, NP

Nurse Practitioner Supervisor

Shiri Morgan, RD

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