

Insights and Lessons from the Pan American Social Marketing Organization's (PASMO) Gestational Diabetes Project in Managua, Nicaragua

Despite being a largely preventable condition, diabetes in pregnancy (DIP)¹ remains a neglected maternal health issue throughout Central America. In Nicaragua and throughout the region, reliable figures on the prevalence of DIP are scarce due to lack of routine testing among pregnant women.

The Pan American Social Marketing Organization (PASMO), a network member of Population Services International, was founded in 1998, with a focus on sexual and reproductive health programming in the Caribbean. PASMO operates the social franchise, *Red Segura* (meaning “safe network” in Spanish). In Nicaragua, PASMO supports 56 social franchise clinics, including 88 private sector health care providers across the country.



In 2011, with support from Novo Nordisk and the World Diabetes Foundation, PASMO began working with private sector health providers across 7 hospitals and 11 satellite clinics in Managua, Nicaragua to offer prenatal clients access to testing, diagnosis and management for DIP as part of a broader package of maternal health services. Lifestyle management through nutritional counseling and exercise plans are key components of the program.

Program Goal

To reduce morbidity and mortality associated with mothers and infants affected by DIP in Nicaragua

Program Objectives

- Improve knowledge of DIP and increase demand for screening and diagnosis of GDM among pregnant women in Managua
- Improve knowledge of risks associated with DIP and management of DIP among participating health care providers and hospitals

¹ DIP refers to both women whose diabetes is detected during pregnancy, e.g., gestational diabetes mellitus, in addition to those women who become pregnant already having the condition.

- Improve management of DIP among pregnant women diagnosed at 7 hospitals and 11 satellite clinics

Program Dates: November 2011 - August 2016

Program Achievements

- A total of 562 providers (nurses, doctors, nutritionists, lab technicians) trained on prevention, diagnosis and management of DIP across 7 hospitals and 11 satellite centers which plan to continue this work
- 16,542 women tested for DIP and 2137 diagnosed
- 11,888 text messages sent to program participants to offer motivational messages and appointment reminders
- 88% of infants delivered in the program were of normal birth weight
- For the first time, nutritionists were integrated into the clinical care team to address dietary needs for women with DIP.

Management of gestational diabetes serves as an example for other areas of medicine, the need for integrated teams, not only for the care of our pregnant patients, but for all.

- Dr. Levy, Director, Carlos Robert Huembes Hospital

Key Recommendations for New Programs

- **Engage early and often with program partners.** PASMO's project was built on a foundation of strong partnerships and the need for local champions, two critical factors for sustainable programming.
- **Establish program benchmarks and monitor regularly to determine program strengths and weaknesses.** The use of specialized stickers on patient charts allowed providers to more easily identify and track women in the program.
- **Train providers on the differences between nutritional and medical management of DIP** and clarify indications for when each are most appropriate.
- **Offer tools that empower pregnant women** to monitor their daily habits. Pregnancy is a unique moment in which women are highly motivated to improve their health. Diaries, nutrition booklets, and motivational text messages are tools that can foster healthy lifestyle choices.
- **Establish routine analysis of program case studies** at program sites to build upon lessons learned from care and management of each case.