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Dorset nurse chosen as diabetes champion for the South West

A nurse from Dorchester has been selected as a Diabetes UK Clinical Champion, to help transform care for people living with diabetes in Dorset.

Agnieszka Graja, a diabetes specialist nurse at Dorset County Hospital, was chosen for her passion for and commitment to excellence in diabetes care.

Diabetes is a condition where there is too much glucose in the blood because the body cannot use it properly. If not managed well, both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes can lead to serious complications.

Diabetes care can vary widely in different regions, and many people struggle to access vital services. As a Clinical Champion, Agnieszka Graja will join a two-year leadership development programme, supported by Diabetes UK. Through her training, she will identify areas in need of improvement and push for changes to improve the care that people in Dorset receive.

This year the programme has recruited four diabetes specialist nurses, as a recent workforce survey highlighted that almost two thirds are having problems accessing professional development that will enable them to take on leadership roles.

Agnieszka Graja said: "I hope that the Clinical Champion role will help me to create opportunities for diabetes nurses across the county to build effective working relationships, resulting in better care for patients. Working together could help the focus on prevention, as well as keeping patients well, educated, engaged and successfully self-managing their condition, receiving care close to home when it is required. My overall aim is to help develop a seamless, integrated diabetes service across Dorset."

Agnieszka Graja is one of 20 UK healthcare professionals, including consultants, nurses, GPs, dietitians, podiatrists and pharmacists, to be appointed a Diabetes UK Clinical Champion in 2017.

Annika Palmer, Diabetes UK south west regional head, said: “Diabetes is the most devastating and fastest growing health crisis of our time, affecting more people than any other serious health condition in the UK. Investing in diabetes care in this way will reduce devastating complications, bringing health and economic benefits.

“Champions like Agnieszka Graja contribute massively to our vision of creating a world where diabetes can do no harm.”

The Clinical Champions programme was launched by Diabetes UK in 2014, in partnership with Novo Nordisk who provide support and funding. There are now 65 champions across the UK, including two in Dorset, who have access to a network of like-minded clinicians.

If you are interested in becoming a Diabetes UK Clinical Champion for the 2018-2020 intake please contact clinicalchampions@diabetes.org.uk or call 020 7424 1896.

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For further media information please contact Susannah Hickling on 01823 448260, email susannah.hickling@diabetes.org.uk, or Diabetes UK’s media relations team on 020 7424 1165 or email pressteam@diabetes.org.uk. For urgent out of hours media enquiries only please call 077 111 76028.

Notes to editors:

In 2016, Diabetes UK undertook a workforce survey to explore the current state of diabetes specialist nursing. To find out more, go to www.diabetes.org.uk/DSN-survey-2016

1. Diabetes UK’s aim is creating a world where diabetes can do no harm. Diabetes is the most devastating and fastest growing health crisis of our time, affecting more people than any other serious health condition in the UK - more than dementia and cancer combined. There is currently no known cure for any type of diabetes. With the right treatment, knowledge and support people living with diabetes can lead a long, full and healthy life. For more information about diabetes and the charity’s work, visit www.diabetes.org.uk
2. Diabetes is a condition where there is too much glucose in the blood because the body cannot use it properly. If not managed well, both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes can lead to devastating complications. Diabetes is one of the leading causes of preventable sight loss in people of

working age in the UK and is a major cause of lower limb amputation, kidney failure and stroke.

3. People with **Type 1 diabetes** cannot produce insulin. About 10 per cent of people with diabetes have Type 1. No one knows exactly what causes it, but it's not to do with being overweight and it isn't currently preventable. It usually affects children or young adults, starting suddenly and getting worse quickly. Type 1 diabetes is treated by daily insulin doses – taken either by injections or via an insulin pump. It is also recommended to follow a healthy diet and take regular physical activity.
4. People with **Type 2 diabetes** don't produce enough insulin or the insulin they produce doesn't work properly (known as insulin resistance). 85 to 90 per cent of people with diabetes have Type 2. They might get Type 2 diabetes because of their family history, age and ethnic background puts them at increased risk. They are also more likely to get Type 2 diabetes if they are overweight. It starts gradually, usually later in life, and it can be years before they realise they have it. Type 2 diabetes is treated with a healthy diet and increased physical activity. In addition, tablets and/or insulin can be required.

For more information on reporting on diabetes, download our journalists' guide: [Diabetes in the News: A Guide for Journalists on Reporting on Diabetes](#) (PDF, 3MB).