

dLifeTV Focuses on the Diabetes Lifestyle for Patients

Sunday evening TV invites viewers with diabetes to learn more about diet, exercise and the need to manage their diabetes.

By **Evan Young**

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For people with diabetes, Sunday evenings may be the best time to watch a little television. Every Sunday at 7 pm EST, "dLifeTV" spends half an hour sharing inspirational stories, recipes, conversation and the latest medical information about diabetes. It is the only show of its kind on the air.

"There's never been a national program focusing on a single disease state," said Howard Steinberg, founder and CEO of LifeMed Media, the parent company of "dLifeTV." The show has been on the air since March 2005.

"One of the reasons we created the show is because new and creative ways are clearly needed to penetrate America's consciousness and engage more people in taking control of their health," he told Endocrine Today.

Steinberg, who grew up in Queens, NY, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when he was 10

years old. He got his diabetes under control as a young adult and went on to have a successful career in marketing. He founded his own

company, Source Marketing, in 1989; he sold the company in 2004



dLife Hosts Jim Turner and J. Anthony Brown and guest Stuart Brink, MD, on the set of dLife along with dLife creator, Howard Steinberg (2nd from right).

and founded LifeMed Media.

He cited ongoing questions about diabetes -- such as why so many people don't seem to take

charge in controlling their diabetes or modifying their behavior -- and its related sociological issues as reasons for started the show. He thought the media

could play a role in diabetes care by reaching out to people with diabetes to get them more "plugged in" to their condition.

"We can't dispense treatment, but can certainly make people with diabetes more interested and available for treatment advice."

-- Howard Steinberg

Diabetes -- a market segment

"If you look at the world as a marketer, diabetes is a large marketing segment. Just as golfing or NASCAR or gardening are lifestyle interests, diabetes is a substantial lifestyle interest, except it's a lifestyle that chooses you rather than you choosing it," Steinberg said.

"The way one historically approaches a lifestyle segment is to build channels that are attractive to them, that they will engage. There was nothing on television that people with diabetes could rely on, nothing on the radio, some print publications. There are countless Web sites that don't go far enough," he said.

In founding "dLife" Steinberg said that his professional marketing background had challenged him to find innovating marketing solutions to problems.

He approached the show as a business problem. "People need help. Not enough people are getting the right message. People need to be engaged. Their primary sources of engagement are health care providers who may not have enough time and whose words may fall on deaf ears," he said. He wanted to create a platform that would combine medical information in an entertaining way to make it easy for people with diabetes to understand, find and view.

Getting advertising was a challenge

The major challenge faced by Steinberg and others working on the show was that advertisers, mainly pharmaceutical companies, needed to be convinced.

"In the health care industry, there is a lot of inertia. Moving the industry into new paradigms takes time and takes more effort than I thought it would. Despite the overwhelming logic of supporting a program like this that reaches 100% of a desired target audience, it still took time to bring some of these sponsors on board to make this thing go," Steinberg said.

It did become a reality, and Steinberg created not just a television show but a multimedia outlet for people with diabetes to utilize that continues to develop. The show now broadcasts on XM satellite radio, and segments can be downloaded as podcasts. Visitors to the dLife.com Web site can watch streaming video from earlier episodes of the television show, read a daily blog and sign up for syndication feeds.

Show content

Differentiation on the show between type 1 and type 2 diabetes is done as appropriate.

"When we get into medical information and issues, there are clear distinctions made. There is also a lot of time spent on general lifestyle issues for people with diabetes: eating right, exercising, what it's like to live with diabetes, traveling, things that are common to people with all types of diabetes," Steinberg said.

Although the show's content is geared towards consumers with diabetes, producers have found that caregivers in the professional com-

munity are also interested and have been very supportive. "A lot of educators, in particular, have told us that we are getting people talking. They are coming to the office asking more questions, saying they saw something on 'dLife,'" Steinberg said.

"The bottom-line is if you get them talking, you are getting them more connected to their disease."

This is the point that needs to be stressed to professionals in particular. "It's not always necessary to have highly sophisticated medical information in a channel like this. It's important to simply provide lifestyle insight and general motivation opportunities for the community to connect," he said.

Diabetes can be isolating

Frequently, the feedback that Steinberg and others involved with "dLifeTV" get from their viewership is that they don't feel so alone anymore.

"Where a professional might watch the show and say that one thing might not be the most sophisticated piece of information, what may not be so obvious is that these people are feeling connected to something. Diabetes can be a very lonely, isolating condition, and if you are getting people connected, then they are going to be more likely to come in asking questions or trying harder."

There are other comparisons to be made in the role that "dLifeTV" plays and the role of health care professionals in the fight against diabetes. "We're providing the air coverage; the doctors and the educators are the foot soldiers," he said.

"But to me, it's a partnership. We can't dispense treatment, but we can certainly make people with

diabetes more interested and available for treatment advise."

For this year and beyond, Steinberg hopes to build upon the programs they have and increase the audience.

"We also hope that we can continue to grow partnerships with doctors and educators so that we can work hand-in-hand," he said.

For more information:

dLifeTV airs every Sunday evening on CNBC, 7:00 pm ET, 6:00 pm CT, 4:00 pm PT; every Sunday morning on DIRECTV channel 251, 7:30 am ET; and six days a week on CoLours TV on Dish TV channel 9407. For more information, visit www.dlife.com.

For your patients

Be featured on dLifeTV

dLifeTV conducts nationwide searches for real people with real stories about living with diabetes. Your patient's special story could be a featured segment on a future episode of dLifeTV. Send an email to realstories@dlife.com, with your name, address, phone number, and your patient's story.

Contribute to the dLife Wall

Your patients may join dLifeTV in building the dLife Wall -- a virtual collage of photos and personal stories about living with diabetes. Find out how to submit stories by visiting www.dlife.com/dLife/do/ShowNewWallHome.