SWEET LIFE

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2019/2020
ABOUT SWEET LIFE

Sweet Life is an inspiring diabetes community for Diabetic South Africans. We are a registered NPO/PBO with a single focus: to improve diabetes in South Africa.

Online, Sweet Life is a diabetes community that informs, inspires and connects people with diabetes in South Africa. We are here to offer reliable advice on all you need to know about diabetes, support people with diabetes and share that just because you have diabetes, doesn’t mean you can’t live a happy, healthy life.

As a registered NPO (220-984) and PBO (930066897) our goals are to improve the diagnosis number in SA (at the moment 1 in 2 people with diabetes are undiagnosed) and improve the health of people with diabetes. We do this by working directly with the National Department of Health and the Diabetes Alliance to improve diabetes education and training in public clinics. We also focus on bringing diabetes into the public eye and the media more often than just once a year in November.

By working directly with people with diabetes in South Africa, and with the National Department of Health (NDoH), we are able to form a bridge between the two and come up with sustainable, long-term solutions that tangibly improve the lives of people with diabetes in South Africa.
Bridget McNulty
Bridget McNulty is a published author, Type 1 diabetic and co-founder of Sweet Life Diabetes Community (www.sweetlife.org.za), one of South Africa’s most trusted diabetes voices. She has over a decade of experience with some of South Africa’s top media brands, as creative director, magazine editor, content strategist, writer and editor. She has published numerous articles on living with diabetes in South African lifestyle magazines, is a former finalist in the Novo Nordisk Media Prize, and is frequently interviewed on national radio and TV on the topic. She is also a member of the IDF Blue Circle Voices.

Mark Peddle
Mark Peddle is the Creative Director and co-founder of Sweet Life. He is also a professional photographer and has many years experience as both a graphic designer and art director. With extensive experience in print and digital design and strategy, BTL art direction, brand development, corporate identity and publishing expertise, Mark understands how to translate information visually. Both his brother and his wife are Type 1 diabetics, so he has a deep understanding of the condition.

Christelle Pike
Christelle Pike is the administrative brain of Sweet Life. She has many years experience working for various clients ensuring that their financial management is in order. She worked with Tsebo FS, a leading Southern African Facilities Management company for 9 years, generating private- and public sector-focused marketing material for them. In this time, she learned how to plan, compile and disseminate effective communication tailored for a diverse target audience ranging from boardroom level to site staff - with a similar spread of healthcare, retail, education, mining and other sectors. Her husband has diabetes, so she has lived with it for 20 years and understands the many facets of the condition.
**Dr Sundeep Ruder**

Dr Sundeep Ruder MBBCh, FCP (SA), FSEM (SA) is an endocrinologist in private practice as well as an associate lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand, honorary consultant at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital and an Executive Committee Member of SEMDSA (Society of Endocrinology Metabolism and Diabetes South Africa). He is an experienced speaker on the topic of Philosophy and Diabetes, and has contributed to many scholarly articles in the *SA Journal of Diabetes* and the *Indian Journal of Endocrinology & Metabolism*, amongst others.

**Sebastian Thompson**

Sebastian Thompson is a behavioural design practitioner and the co-founder of Gravity Ideas and Lake Innovation, two of South Africa’s most respected behavioural science companies. Sebastian uses the learnings and techniques from the behavioural sciences to better understand users and improve the design of business products, programs, services and communications. He is working to make the world a better place by designing for the mind, and curious about how this can be applied to diabetes.

**Nobuntu Webster**

Nobuntu Webster is a recognised business leader and development strategist. Her work over the past 10 years has been focussed on media strategy in the areas of social end economic development. As an entrepreneur, she counts amongst her accolades KZN Businesswoman of the Year 2010 and was a recipient of a KZN Department of Economic Development Umyezane Award in 2009. She was recently selected by the US Embassy in SA and the US Department of State as one of 23 women leaders from around the world to take part in the International Women Leadership Programme. Nobuntu has extensive leadership experience chairing development organisations such as the International Women’s Forum SA, Businesswomen’s Association of SA and KZN Youth Chamber of Commerce.
When I look back on the 2019/2020 year, it feels like the year Sweet Life stepped into its own power. For many years, we thought that our goal was to spread an inspiring message about diabetes through a magazine and website - to show that it’s possible to live a healthy, happy life with diabetes. And that is so true: but in the South African context, it’s not enough.

Diabetic South Africans, our Facebook community, has over 22,000 members - with engagement that’s 10 times the norm for online health communities. But that’s 22,000 in the face of hundreds of thousands of South Africans living with diabetes - and many more who are undiagnosed.

This year, we not only became a PBO but also formed the Diabetes Alliance and started working directly with the National Department of Health (NDoH). There has been so much good work being done in the diabetes space in South Africa, but much of it has been done in silos. Companies and organisations each have their own projects that they work on: all for the greater good of diabetes in South Africa, but without communicating with other companies and organisations working on similar things. The Diabetes Alliance unites all these people.

At the beginning of this year, we started looking at all the research that has been done into diabetes research in public clinics (here are the January and February reports) and performed a similar function: opening up the great work that is being done nationwide to all those who are interested and working in this space. Sweet Life has now met with or spoken to pretty much every person working in diabetes education in South Africa!

Now it’s time to synthesize all this knowledge. Onward to an even more impactful 2020/2021!

BRIDGET MCNULTY
The 2019/2020 year was a powerful one for Sweet Life. Our Facebook group grew into the largest online diabetes community in SA, we became a PBO, started the Diabetes Alliance and began work with the NDoH.

Highlights included:

**The largest online diabetes community in SA**
Diabetic South Africans currently has 22,377 members - growing daily. This is an engaged, active group of people with diabetes in SA, who check in every day for tips, advice, to ask questions and share experiences. Some pharmaceutical companies have bigger numbers of fans, but no engagement - our engagement rate is consistently in the 12% range (an engagement rate of 1% is considered good).

**Forming the Diabetes Alliance**
In September 2019, Sweet Life was instrumental in forming the Diabetes Alliance: the first coalition of organisations, associations and companies working in diabetes in South Africa. The Diabetes Alliance met with the NDoH in October 2019 and February 2020 and is currently working on a diabetes education project for NDoH: a plan to educate both patients and healthcare providers in public clinics about diabetes.

**Working with NDoH**
What makes working with NDoH so exciting is that once we conclude what kind of diabetes educational materials are most impactful, we will be able to disseminate them nationwide with ease. We have just finished the research element of this diabetes education project, and will now be formulating a proposed plan for reaching South Africa’s diabetics where they are, in language they understand, in the format that makes the most sense.

**Becoming a PBO**
Sweet Life has been an NPO since 2018, but in the 2019 year we were recognised as a PBO – which means that SARS believes our work is for the public good. It is a rigorous application and one that we are honoured to have completed.
The financial position of Sweet Life has been vastly improved this year. Please refer to the Annual Financial Statements doc.

During 2019, we published a Diabetes Guidebook for Pick n Pay and distributed 15,000 copies around the country. Pick n Pay continues to support our work, but has agreed to focus on the diabetes education project for 2020/2021 for the same amount of money as their previous online sponsorship.

BD also sponsors the diabetes education project, and a monthly article which appears on the site (R15,000/month) and Roche sponsors us to share their excellent diabetes content with our community (R12,500/month).

In December 2019, we received a Shuttleworth Foundation Flash Grant to the value of $5000 (R71,000 at that time) in support of our work. We will submit a 6-month report in June 2020 to show what work we have done. We have invested that money into a 7 day notice account until the financial market settles enough to warrant a more long-term investment (as advised by our financial advisor).

Monthly expenses remain low, although as of November 2019 our founder, Bridget McNulty, is being paid a monthly salary to work on Sweet Life.
GOALS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

Our 2020 goal is firmly in the diabetes education space. Using the knowledge we have gained from the research already done in diabetes education in public clinics, and having spoken to all the professors, endocrinologists, doctors and diabetes educators who are working in diabetes education in public clinics in South Africa, we are uniquely placed to be able to synthesize this knowledge into a cohesive form.

Working with the Diabetes Alliance, we will formulate a suggested plan for the NDoH: ideally a print and digital solution that will reach the people who need education and training most, in a way that works for them. We work closely with behavioural scientist Sebastian Thompson to ensure we are creating content that results in meaningful behavioural change, and that we are suggesting sustainable solutions for the NDoH to implement nationwide.

Alongside this work, we intend remaining South Africa’s favourite diabetes community, and growing our community in size and impact. Diabetic South Africans is a direct line into the people we want to help: instant feedback is enormously helpful in creating the right kind of content. And, of course, we still want to show it’s possible to live a healthy, happy life with diabetes!

Relevant links:
Website: www.sweetlife.org.za
Facebook: www.facebook.com/DiabeticSouthAfricans
Twitter: www.twitter.com/sweetlifeSA
Sweet Life is supported by an expert panel of top diabetes specialists in South Africa. Diabetes isn’t just a medical condition. Our volunteer team includes top diabetes experts from all over South Africa: endocrinologist, doctor, diabetes educators, dieticians, podiatrists, ophthalmologist and counsellor. These diabetes experts help us to provide the South African diabetes community with reliable, relevant and medically accurate diabetes information.

Endocrinologist: Dr. Joel Dave
MBChB PhD FCP Cert Endocrinology. Head of Endocrinology at the University of Cape Town and Groote Schuur Hospital. He specialises in the diagnosis and management of a wide spectrum of simple and complex endocrine-related disorders, particularly thyroid disease and diabetes.

Doctor: Dr. Claudine Lee
A family doctor (GP) with a passion for treating diabetes well. She is based in Hilton, KwaZulu/Natal. She has a Diploma in Diabetes (Cardiff University) as well as Ophthalmology and Anaesthesiology (so is able check your eyes). She also runs an insulin pump centre. Get in touch with her on 083 289 8351.

Diabetes Educators:
Jeannie Berg
A dedicated registered pharmacist and diabetic educator with specialty experience in primary health care and diabetes, Jeannie serves on a clinical co-ordination committee of a medical aid administrator and works in Secunda. Her motto is: Diabetes is a journey and we need a lot of friends to walk it with!

Kate Bristow
A qualified nursing sister and certified diabetes educator who runs a Centre for Diabetes in Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg. She works with clients of all ages and types of diabetes (Type 1, Type 2, Pre-Diabetes and Gestational Diabetes) guiding them in self-management. She also organizes wellness days in the community, and complimentary diabetes education sessions for patients at local medical centres. She has been involved in diabetes education since 2006, and has a Diploma in Diabetes Care from Glamorgan University.
Dieticians:

Genevieve Jardine
A dietician based in Durban, who is registered with ADSA, the Association for Dietetics in South Africa, and specialises in diseases of lifestyle, diabetes and weight loss. She is the co-author of Your Journey with Diabetes: guiding you through the highs and lows towards optimal blood glucose control, with Dr. Kathryn Wiseman, and is in private practice in Durban.

Ajita Ratanjee
A Registered Dietician in Pretoria East and the Founder of Easy Health Wellness in Moreleta Park. Her special interest is ICU nutrition and lifestyle diseases, mainly obesity and diabetes. With over a decade of experience in working with clients, she loves seeing the results of people make positive lifestyle change.

Lauren Moore
A Registered Dietician based at the Diabetes Life Clinic in Cape Town’s southern suburbs, Lauren holds a Masters degree in Nutrition and is a member of the Association for Dietetics in South Africa. She has a special interest in nutritional management of diabetes, kidney disease, cancer and gastrointestinal disorders. Her passion for dietetics stems from her desire to help people by empowering them with practical knowledge and giving them the confidence to make healthier choices and live more fulfilled lives.

Podiatrists:

Andy Blecher
A podiatrist who has been in practice in Cape Town for over 10 years, where she now lives with her three children. She is currently running the Western Cape Diabetic Foot Clinic with a team of other specialists. She holds a 4 year National Higher Diploma in Podiatry, and is on the Western Cape committee of the diabetic foot working group (DFWG). She has a certificate in biomechanics from the international ICB college of biomechanics and is a member of the HPCSA and BHF. Her special interests are the diabetic foot and her motto is: Prevention IS the cure.
Podiatrists:
Anette Thompson
Holds an M Tech Podiatry (UJ) and B Tech Podiatry (SA) and is currently Chairperson of the Footwear Committee of the SA Podiatry Association; Clinical Director for Anette Thompson & Associates, Inc., Podiatrists, KZN and accredited with both the CDE and Diabetes SA. Anette is passionate about foot health and footwear and has registered 3 footwear related patents. Both her mother and husband are Type 2 diabetics so she knows how to “walk the talk”!

Ophthalmologist:
Dr. Dale Harrison
An ophthalmologist in private practice in Cape Town, and a sessional consultant at Groote Schuur Hospital. He did his undergraduate training at UCT graduating MBCHB in 1992, and completed his specialist training at Groote Schuur FC Ophth (SA) in 2002. His motto? Get your eyes checked annually!

Counsellor:
Gabi Richter
A Type 1 diabetic and a counsellor using emotionally focused therapy (EFT) and grief counselling as a framework, Gabi is passionate about helping those with diabetes with the emotional side of the condition. EFT helps people to break negative cycles and create new and positive ones.