

“Awareness” Key To Fighting Any Disease Says Dr. Smita Joshi On U.S. Visit To End Diabetes In India

By A STAFF WRITER

Dr. Smita Joshi and members of her family have become the face of spreading awareness about diabetes, one of the major diseases affecting children in India, but also identified among the top chronic conditions diagnosed among Indian-Americans and South Asians in the United States.

“To fight against any disease, awareness is the only weapon we have. We saw that in the pandemic,” Dr. Joshi said during her Sept. 6, 2022, interview on ITV Gold. In fact, diabetes is a major cause of blindness, heart attacks, and kidney-related problems, “Which is why today, I am in the United States to speak about it.”

During her interview with Parikh Worldwide Media's ITV Gold television service (PWM-ITV), Dr. Joshi spoke enthusiastically about her extraordinary campaign and her efforts to bring Americans behind it.

This is not the first time that Dr. Joshi and her sister Dr. Shukla Raval, have come to the U.S. to spread awareness about the disease (News India Times Sept. 12, 2019). In 2019, they came to this country as part of their ‘self-drive’ initiative which included driving from Kashmir to Kanyakumari covering 14 Indian states; then continuing the journey by being flagged off in California during a meeting of the American Diabetes Association.

Her campaign has received the endorsement of Dr. Sudhir Parikh, Padma Shri recipient and chairman of PWM-ITV, who even back in 2019, expressed full support for Dr. Joshi's campaign.

During the ITV Gold interview Sept. 6, Dr. Joshi speaking about Type 1 Diabetes, noting that it is an auto-immune disease whose origins can be genetic or the result of environmental exposures. It leads to insulin reduction and in children in particular, this affects their whole life, making them tired and prone to catching infections. “Type 1 Diabetes cannot remain asymptomatic for long and a child will be diagnosed within a week or 10 days because they will have to go to a doctor,” as a result of catching some infection or becoming unwell.

Dr. Joshi gave an inspiring account about four generations of her family being

involved in medicine and serving India's poor – starting with her grandfather Dr. Vasdev Raval, followed by her own father Dr. Anil Raval, then herself, and today, by her own children.

Dr. Joshi was born and brought up in Unjha Nagar, a small village in the District of Mehsana from where current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hails.

Her grandfather, the first doctor in the village rendered a lot of free service to the poor in his practice, including feeding them. “I remember my mother cooking 25 to 30 meals daily for the poor,” she said. Those are the sources that instilled the value of service to the community, which today extends to all of India and abroad. Her grandfather also convinced her brother to stay and serve in India instead of traveling to U.S., “He showed him the long line of poor people waiting for treatment outside,” and said money could not buy him the fulfilment that service would.

And when her own mother was concerned about sending Dr. Joshi and her sister to medical college, her grandfather supported them after taking the girls aside and asking them if they would pledge to work in service of the people. “We promised him we would devote our life to service,” Dr. Joshi said in the interview.

Her commitment to a diabetes campaign began at the 2018 Indian Medical Association conference attended by 4,000 delegates, an audience where she spread her message along with her sister. It included signing up 10 other women physicians to drive from Gujarat to New Delhi and apprise the central government to undertake the cause.

“We urged doctors to give a few minutes to tell patients about diabetes, not just to give prescriptions,” she said.

Word spread among those doctors who had also attended the IMA conference in Gujarat, and from there out to other parts of India.

“This was very successful. We explained how we all had to come on one platform. Our Indian Medical Association encouraged us to go national. We worked to involve families in the campaign,” she said, including her own children, just like her grandfather did when he held camps in rural areas. Today he is 75 and still going strong, Dr. Joshi said.



Dr. Smita Joshi, right, who is leading a campaign for diabetes awareness in India and the U.S., with Dr. Sudhir Parikh, chairman of Parikh Worldwide Media, at ITV Gold studios in Edison, New Jersey, Sept. 6, 2022.



Dr. Smita Joshi being interviewed by Piya Jyoti Kachroo at ITV Gold studio in Edison, N.J., Sept. 6, 2022.



Dr. Smita Joshi (right) and Dr. Shukla Raval have been on a campaign to raise awareness of the epidemic of diabetes in India, especially amongst children and juveniles in the country.



Kashmir to Kanyakumari: Diabetes Awareness Car Drive Campaign, flagged off by Delegates of DIABETESINDIA and Hon'ble Health Minister of Rajasthan.