

Rising Stars Global Initiative:

A Partnership in Health Professional Education

Celebrating 10 years

Ruth Taswell, MA, CSER

WITH RELATIONSHIPS GREATLY CHANGED between health care and industry professionals in the United States due to a newer era of transparency, the obstacles and ethics of forging an appropriate collaboration may seem daunting. How best to form an ethical, trusting and meaningful partnership is a challenge not to be underestimated.

For 10 consecutive years, International Diabetes Center (IDC) at Park Nicollet, HealthPartners Institute (Minneapolis) and Sanofi (headquartered in Paris) have met this challenge. Together, they've achieved a distinctive partnership

in health professional education translating the latest advances in diabetes therapy and technology into practice—and more.

IDC, by organizing and leading the education, and Sanofi, by providing financial support and encouragement, have established the greatly successful Rising Stars Global Initiative (Rising Stars). Over the last decade, Rising Stars has grown to include not only the Rising Stars Educational Program, but also the Etzwiler Scholars Program and the Etzwiler Scholars Alumni Program.

Comprising an interactive platform of evidence-based education, practical training and mentorship free of industry bias, Rising

Stars offers an alternative and unique opportunity in health professional education. The ultimate goal: to share knowledge, prepare the next generation of diabetes experts for international leadership, and provide better and more evidence-based patient-centered care.



Professor Richard Bergenstal, MD, executive director of IDC and co-chair of Rising Stars, welcomes participants to the 10th anniversary Rising Stars Educational Program in 2018 in Berlin.

“Up-to-date with state-of-the-art therapies. Exposure to treatment preferences throughout the world.”

A mutual mission to enhance the care of people with diabetes

At the heart of what makes the partnership between IDC and Sanofi succeed lies recognition of the need to address the problem of diabetes care differently, in addition to a mutual mission and trust. “With pharma,” says Richard M. Bergenstal, MD, executive director of IDC and co-chair of Rising Stars, “It can be hard to get past ‘hands off.’ But drugs are part of the solution of advancing diabetes care. We’ve never pushed specific products in our programs. It’s nice when both parties are able to work together. As experts, we’re building a network to address the global crisis in diabetes.”

A response to a global crisis, perhaps even speeding up advancements, Rising Stars also shows how industry-sponsored education can have a far-reaching impact. Across the globe exists a significant mismatch between the seemingly never-ending number of people with diabetes and the number of endocrinologists to care for them.

“When people are first diagnosed with diabetes, it’s only natural that they feel anxious and afraid,” says Maha Radhakrishnan, MD, head of Medical at Sanofi’s Primary Care Business Unit. “At Sanofi, we’re here to listen and support the people whose lives are touched by diabetes. That’s what we’ve been doing for more than 100 years. Education is part of our DNA to support healthcare professionals in their mission to help people live the life they want.”

Calling Rising Stars a “landmark education program,” Nadia Ait-Aissa, MD, head of Sanofi’s Global Scientific Relations and Medical Education, Primary Care Business Unit, also describes the partnership as a “very good example for worldwide science and education that brings together passionate people to enhance the care of people with diabetes.” A founding partner of Rising Stars, Dr. Ait-Aissa highlights the “exceptional journey” between IDC and Sanofi over the past decade with “continuous efforts and outstanding collaboration” with IDC leadership and faculty mentoring.

“It’s important for us to have industry involved,” echoes Professor David Owens, CBE, MD, FRCP, FIBIOL, ongoing faculty member of Rising Stars and emeritus professor of Diabetes Medicine, Swansea University and Cardiff University School of Medicine (Wales, United Kingdom). “They [industry] have the drugs, and it’s important for us to evaluate the drugs. They’re in a position to take the financial burden away from us, as long as they have no clinical influence on the education program.”

Adds Professor Owens, “They’re honest, and respect the lines of demarcation between academics and finances. The middle ground is our mutual interest in patients.”

History of Rising Stars—How It All Began

Rising Stars, with its initial program in 2009, arose from IDC founder Dr. Donnell D. Etwiler’s commitment to patient-centered care globally, points out Dr. Bergenstal. As of 2018, more than 350 clinicians representing more than 50 countries have participated in Rising Stars.

“IDC has had great success,” explains Dr. Bergenstal, “with blending research and practical application, and putting them together in a systematic way to implement. IDC’s success caught the attention of not only other clinics in the United States, but also the attention of other interested parties, such as

pharma, who have a big responsibility, or as their mission, to transfer knowledge and improve care. One of these parties was Sanofi.”

Sanofi, whose mission is to protect and improve human health worldwide, was exploring institutions capable of helping move their mission forward and reached out to IDC. The mutual interest in improving care, sharing knowledge and building leaders was appealing. They interviewed IDC leadership, including Dr. Bergenstal, along with Roger Mazze, PhD, and Ellie Strock, APRN-BC, FAANP, CDE. And, as Dr. Bergenstal notes, they “saw that we’re capable and have ideas.” Through their leadership, the Rising Stars program was launched.

A new program, a new approach

One of those ideas was to create a new program to provide endocrinologists and diabetologists with continuing education opportunities on the latest evidence-based therapies and technologies to use in practice in areas internationally where they are starting to become available. The program would also help to build relationships and facilitate development of the next generation of diabetes experts for international leadership. These leaders can then share their knowledge.

Explains Dr. Bergenstal, IDC leadership told Sanofi, “Our best success is to build an ongoing partnership and sustaining relationships as part of a program with themes every year on the most important, hot topics. But the program needs to always be practical, use a team approach and be applied in a systematic way.”

“Sanofi said ‘yes,’ let’s give it a try,” continues Bergenstal. “We went into it with the notion of wanting to achieve these goals, but not certain how it all would come together.”

The approach, says Bergenstal, is not your typical one-way lecture learning. “We like the science. We like even more the dialog and interactivity, so we start with lectures and then go to breakout groups. Small groups and case studies are an integral part



Rising Stars Topics 2009–2018[†]

- **Insulin Therapy in Type 2 Diabetes**—EASD* Vienna and IDF** Montreal (2009)
- **Management of Type 1 Diabetes**—EASD Stockholm (2010)
- **Pathways to Complications**—EASD Lisbon and IDF Dubai (2011)
- **Innovation in Technology in Diabetes Research, Care and Education**—EASD Berlin (2012)
- **Breakthroughs in Diabetes: New Therapies, New Combinations, New Technologies**—EASD Barcelona and IDF Melbourne (2013)
- **Developing Clinical Excellence in Diabetes: Translating Advances in Research and Technology into Practice**—EASD Vienna (2014)
- **Diabetes Management Today: Bridging Physiology and Clinical Practice**—EASD Stockholm (2015)
- **Advances in Diabetes Therapy, Technology and Progress Toward a Cure**—EASD Munich (2016)
- **Diabetes Head to Heart: Translating Evidence into Practice**—EASD Lisbon (2017)
- **Diabetes Past and Present: Celebrating Advances in Diabetes Management**—EASD Berlin (2018)

[†] Quotes from Rising Stars participants noted anonymously in program evaluations for each of the 10 years are included throughout this article.

* European Association for the Study of Diabetes

**International Diabetes Federation

“Cases we discussed will help to provide better treatment of my own patients.”

of sharing and learning. We have a core faculty, but always bring additional experts to cover the emerging topics.”

The approach—and partnership between IDC and Sanofi—has indeed been a long-standing success. As Maeva Germe, medical director for Sanofi’s Global Scientific Relations and Medical Education, Primary Care Business Unit, reflected following the 10th Rising Stars program in 2018 in Berlin, “The program is a living testament of how a decade of a pioneering educational program can make a difference in the

lives of young leaders of diabetes in the future.” She highlighted not only the honor and pleasure of working with IDC, but also conveyed her “thanks and gratitude to the esteemed faculty who shared their science, knowledge and last but not least, their passion with the young leaders of the future.”

Education free of industry influence

At the same time, Rising Stars had to meet the need for independent development of education that is free of bias or influence from industry (pharma)—which it does. As 2018 faculty member Bernard Zinman, CM, MD, FRCPC, FACP, professor of Medicine at the University of Toronto and senior scientist at the Lunenfeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute, Mount Sinai Hospital (Toronto, Ontario, Canada) commented, “The program is a fabulous, successful example of how Sanofi supports the program but does not view it as a marketing exercise.”

Sanofi supports IDC to provide the unbiased training program through an unrestricted educational grant process. IDC develops the program agenda and curriculum, and determines and invites faculty members, with no input from Sanofi on the content or faculty. Sanofi, via its country affiliates, invites clinicians throughout the world, except for in the United States, to participate in the program.

Building the “buzz”

“The approach was different and worked,” adds Bergenstal. “As we went from one year to the next year and the next year, key people [participants] wanted to return. Sanofi has been incredibly collaborative. They have the budget to cover faculty and have facilitated getting people there.” The buzz started to build that it was a good program, continues Bergenstal, but “we had to get buy-in at the local level to make it work.”

Various Rising Stars participants attest to the good buzz from previous participants, including Roseanne (Rose) Yeung, MD, a 2017 Etwiler Scholar and assistant professor, Department of Medicine at the University of Alberta (Canada). Participants often know another Rising Star who suggested or encouraged them to look into the program. “The Sanofi medical liaison who got to know my interest in population health and diabetes,” explains Dr. Yeung, “also knew another Rising Star. They suggested and encouraged me to apply.”

Other participants, including Drs. Magdy Megallaa from Egypt, Ines Khochtali from Tunisia, Xavier Cos from Spain and Sylvia Franc from France, share similar experiences. Notes Dr. Cos, a diabetologist trained in primary care, the “Sanofi Spanish affiliate recognized the potential my primary care perspective offered given the proportion of medical doctors in primary care in Rising Stars is low.”

Held the past 10 years in conjunction with the European Association for the Study of Diabetes

“I feel much more equipped with evidence-based reasons for my clinical decision making.”

(EASD) annual meeting and, on alternate years, the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) meeting, Rising Stars has been much more than just a series of yearly one-day educational programs for endocrinologists, diabetologists and primary care physicians. The theme changes each year based on trending topics in diabetes care, along with some formatting of the program to try out different types of interactive and practical learning.

The continuity of the program and the ongoing relationship building and mentoring, however, has remained a constant. As a result, Rising Stars has many examples of “rising stars” becoming diabetes experts and leaders of diabetes organizations and care initiatives in their own countries.

“We know attendees change their clinical practice and quality of care,” notes Professor Owens. “We’ve become an ever-expanding family with mutual interests and goals.”

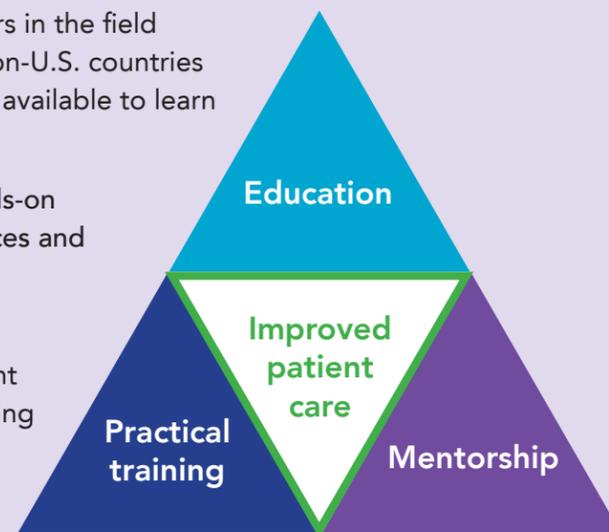
Dr. Megallaa concurs: “I get acquainted every year with the latest updates in diabetes medicine and get exposed to such a stimulating scientific environment, which has been really motivating to me to initiate several research projects and practice-related ideas.”

With continued success of Rising Stars, more advances are likely to be seen in expanding Dr. Etwiler’s vision.

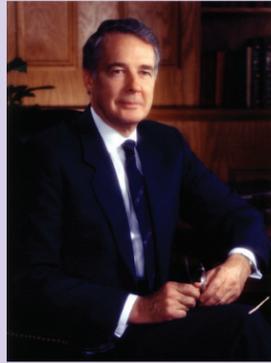
The Rising Stars Program Approach

The comprehensive approach combines:

- ♦ **Education:** Faculty includes expert leaders in the field globally to work with participants from non-U.S. countries where professional opportunities are less available to learn about cutting-edge advances
- ♦ **Practical training:** Case studies and hands-on demonstrations of new technology, devices and global applications
- ♦ **Mentorship:** Meetings with faculty for relationship building, discussion on current projects for advice on research and ongoing support to implement learnings, technologies and care processes



IDC Founder Dr. Donnell D. Etwiler 1927–2003



The Etwiler Scholars Program pays tribute to Dr. Etwiler, who “put the team approach to diabetes care on the map,” says Gregg D. Simonson, PhD, director of IDC Professional Training and Consulting and co-chair of Rising Stars. Of most

relevance are Dr. Etwiler’s focus on practicing personal care as well as advocating to patients “We can do it.” instead of “You can do it.” These notable advances originated largely from Dr. Etwiler’s innovative vision for diabetes care, which over the decades has spread globally.

“My father’s vision for the International Diabetes Center and diabetes patient care was patient-centered, not doctor-dictated,” says daughter Nancy Etwiler, an attorney. “The establishment of the International Diabetes Center is reflective of my father as a visionary in the field.”

IDC was a logical extension of Dr. Etwiler’s concept that the patient is responsible for their care and is to be surrounded by a support team of doctors, family, dietitians, nurses, educators and others. Explains Etwiler’s daughter, “If this was the model, then everyone on the team needed to understand the disease and have long-term management skills.”

“He was not content with just caring for patients in the usual manner,” adds Ms. Etwiler. “He often pushed his staff to consider new methods of management.”

As Dr. Bergenstal notes, Dr. Etwiler was committed to sharing his methods with others: “IDC has a long history of training people locally, nationally and internationally on teams that can work together to achieve the best possible care for patients.”

The Etwiler Scholars Program

Buy-in at the local level began to take off following the establishment in 2010 of the initial Etwiler Scholars Program. Named in honor of Dr. Etwiler, the distinguished founder of IDC and leader of international collaboration in diabetes management, the award program was a new idea developed by IDC leadership.

“We wondered how we could build on the group of people [Rising Stars participants] who were most engaged and re-inforce a longitudinal approach,” explains Dr. Bergenstal. Of the approximately 60 Rising Stars the first year, about 12 participants returned for the second-year program. IDC realized they wanted to expand the mentorship and build stronger, ongoing relationships.

With additional unrestricted educational support from Sanofi, the international Etwiler Scholars Program became another opportunity for Rising Stars participants. Each Rising Stars participant is encouraged to apply to be selected as an Etwiler Scholar before attending the Rising Stars Program.

Participants must submit a completed application to IDC based on their clinical practice qualifications, research activities and publications they have authored. They must also provide a letter of recommendation from a colleague or mentor. In selecting Etwiler Scholars, IDC also considers applicants’ participation during the Rising Stars Program.

At the end of the Rising Stars Program, IDC announces up to six scholars. By the 10th Rising Stars Program in 2018, the number of qualified applicants had increased so much that IDC, thanks to Sanofi, was able to select eight scholars.



The 2019 Etwiler Scholars announced at the 10th anniversary Rising Stars Program in 2018 in Berlin include (from left to right in photo above): Muhammad Adnan Kanpurwala, MD, PhD (Pakistan); Tomislav Bozek, MD, PhD (Croatia); Maria Fernandez, MD (Spain); Peter Novodvorsky, MD, PhD (United Kingdom); Joana Ramis, MD, PhD (Spain); Debmalya Sanyal, MD (India); Kamel Rohoma, MD, PhD (Egypt); Mila Boyadzhieva, MD (Bulgaria).

Training at IDC

The Etwiler Scholars Program is held each Spring at IDC in Minneapolis. The program consists of a week-long series of lectures and training activities. “The scholars spend one week intensively covering topics you can’t cover in just one to two days,” explains Dr. Bergenstal. “At the same time, they learn about IDC and get to know one another.”

At the end of the week, each scholar provides a short presentation to the other scholars and IDC faculty—as well as Nancy Etwiler, Dr. Etwiler’s daughter—on diabetes management in their country. They each highlight their clinical practice and research activities.

“I’m grateful for the people who appreciated the qualities in my dad and created a program that reflects him at every level,” says Ms. Etwiler, who loves to meet the scholars. “I really appreciate being included each year not only to see dear IDC friends and see how IDC continues to evolve and be relevant in our times, but in particular to interact—even if briefly—with the new faces of diabetes care globally.” Describing the program as “mutually enriching,” she adds, “It is a lovely touchstone for me of my dad’s

legacy, his value and his investment in others professionally, but also his sheer enjoyment of getting to know others personally around the world.”

Depending on their home country, clinicians in the Etwiler Scholars Program find their participation offers some especially important advantages. Etwiler Scholar Dr. Yeung emphasizes the unique learning and relationship-

building experience: “I had the wonderful benefit of networking with the program organizers and fellow scholars. I really appreciated seeing the systematic approach to teaching and diabetes education at the IDC.”

Noting that the program content was excellent, especially the updates on cutting-edge technology, she calls out getting familiar with using a continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) system as the biggest influence on her practice. “Having more time to get into the nitty gritty of AGP [ambulatory glucose profile based on CGM data] firsthand from people doing this work was such a privilege.”

Learning more about a systematic approach was key for 2016 Etwiler Scholar Dr. Ines Khochtali. “It was good to see the structure of endocrinology in IDC from a very high-level organizational perspective as well as to see the connections between patients and doctors, between the care team—it was very interesting. In Tunisia, care is very hierarchical, very layered. IDC has shared decision-making, much more connection.”

“Excellent opportunity to network and learn from world-recognized experts.”

“Networking with great faculty will improve research in my own country.”

Expanding research

For other scholars, the program offers a unique opportunity to go beyond learning new technology and move into the world of research. Saying he spent “one of the most informative weeks of my academic life in IDC,” 2011 Etwiler Scholar Dr. Megallaa describes his experience in the program as a “once-in-life opportunity to enrich one’s knowledge and experience in diabetes medicine.”

He explains how he learned to use CGM and optimize it for managing diabetes and then initiated research back home at Alexandria University. His focus: to study the glycemic profile of local Egyptian meals and food items in patients with and without diabetes and obesity using CGM. He anticipates publication of his study forthcoming soon.

Improving leadership skills

Other scholars, such as Dr. Cos among the first cohort of Etwiler Scholars in 2010, emphasize the program’s support in improving communication and leadership skills. As chairperson of a nongovernmental organization (NGO) now, he says, “the coaching I received at IDC allowed me to be better prepared and face the responsibilities in my leadership role. I’m involved in a lot of education and delivering education.”

Dr. Megallaa also speaks to gaining confidence from the Etwiler Scholars Program. With hands-on practice during the intensive education week at IDC, he felt more confident to initiate education with his diabetes patients on some issues, such as carb counting. “I used to leave it to the dietitians, but now

that I understand it better I discuss it more often with patients; before I avoided the conversation.”

Moreover, he says, the knowledge and experience he got as an Etwiler Scholar benefited him a lot in the domain of distance learning. He currently works as an honorary lecturer for the Cardiff University (United Kingdom) Post-Graduate Diabetes Diploma and as a supervisor on Master of Science diabetes dissertations.

These scholars are just a few of the more than 50 who have grown professionally in their own countries, sharing knowledge learned with colleagues and students, and implementing their learnings in clinical practice and research to improve patient-centered care. Many also have served as guest faculty during later Rising Stars programs as well as presented at major international meetings.

“Building stronger relationships continues with ongoing collaboration following the training week,” notes Dr. Bergenstal. “They think about each other when working on a project or talk to each other when they have a new idea; they learn from one another by staying connected.”

To date, 57 Etwiler Scholars have been recognized from Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, France, India, Israel, Japan, Macedonia, Mexico, Myanmar, Pakistan, Peru, Russia, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Taiwan, Thailand, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom.

The international aspect of the program is particularly important for Nancy Etwiler. Noting that her father died in 2003, she says, “He would love that the Etwiler Scholars Program was established and continues to flourish and reflect the newest faces and emerging leaders of diabetes care that best fit each culture and local patient needs. He would have loved how, in these geo-political times, the program offers a counterview of how to reach across the globe to build bonds, openly share professional experiences and support each other.”

The Etwiler Scholars Alumni Program

In 2015, IDC and Sanofi extended Rising Stars and their partnership further with the introduction of the Etwiler Scholars Alumni Program. As the network of Etwiler Scholars had grown, with 49 alumni from 28 countries, the newly established alumni program gave the scholars an additional opportunity for building relationships and expanding mentorship.

Held the evening before the Rising Stars Program, the Etwiler Scholars Alumni Program provides a forum for any Etwiler Scholar to build on strengths and receive guidance, in person, on current research from faculty leading the current Rising Stars Program, as well as other alumni scholars.

IDC invites alumni scholars to submit the titles of their current projects. Based on the relevancy of the research, while also considering the variety of topics and countries represented, IDC selects three to four scholars to present their work. Following each presentation, faculty and other scholars ask questions or provide commentary, feedback and mentoring.

Discussion sometimes reveals cultural differences or barriers in patient care and diabetes management to address going forward. However, widespread support

“This program challenged me to think in different ways.”

among the group appears to be ever-present based on the Etwiler Scholars Alumni Program in Berlin in 2018.

For example, following a discussion on use of the subcutaneous closed loop with exercise and the challenges of getting the right insulin dose, Dr. Bergenstal encouraged all: “We need to keep working on it and we will figure it out.” Adds Professor Owens, “Each presentation offers elements of sharing protocols and experience, which through questions and suggestions afterwards can also provide encouragement.”

“This program is a great opportunity to develop a large network worldwide, with active people involved in diabetes research,” says Etwiler Scholar Dr. Franc. “It’s also an opportunity to participate with the faculty on various current topics on diabetes, and to discuss in a kindly atmosphere, advancements in the field of diabetes research and in the management of patients with diabetes.”



Dr. Rose Yeung (Canada) presenting her research activities at the 2018 Etwiler Scholars Alumni Program in Berlin to faculty and other alumni.

Country-Specific Challenges in Managing Diabetes Care

In meeting the goal to impact diabetes care in areas internationally where training opportunities as well as resources are not available or less accessible, the differences between countries globally can present unique challenges for both Rising Stars faculty and participants. These differences, however, also are exactly why the program's unique approach and global emphasis can positively influence sharing and promoting advances in diabetes care.

As 2016 Etwiler Scholar Dr. Khoctali notes, "In Tunisia, most patients seen in nephrology have diabetes. We don't have good programs for prevention." Based on her experience with Rising Stars and as an Etwiler Scholar, though, she says her department has applied to get money to use CGM. She's also tried to reproduce the approach used in Rising Stars in Tunisia's diabetes meetings. "Sharing ideas, workshops and discussion are very interesting, very open. We don't have this in our country."

Even in more developed countries, such as France or Spain, limited resources can present great challenges for clinicians, as well as patients, managing diabetes.

Thanks to technological solutions like telemedicine, says 2010 Etwiler Scholar Dr. Franc, using technological tools adopted for patients with chronic disease that really impacts their lives can make a difference. Dr. Franc, a diabetologist for adults who has been involved with the development of telemedicine in France as vice president of the national Society of Telemedicine (SFT-ANTEL) and published various papers on the subject, also notes though, "To be largely adopted in clinical practice, telemedicine has to be financed, which was not the case in France until recently. My wish is that telemedicine is developed more broadly and reimbursed. However, it requires a complete reorganization of health care teams and some changes also in the way we practice medicine."

In Spain on the other hand, where Dr. Cos says primary care is very empowered to treat diabetes, referral to endocrinology is rare. Here, instead, more is needed in advancing quality improvement in dosing, assessing products and implementing guidelines to improve diabetes care.

Egypt faces another kind of challenge altogether. Says Dr. Megallaa, "The number of people with diabetes is increasing in Egypt, which is already one of the top 10 countries in the number of patients with diabetes. The main challenge here is a financial one, as we do not have a good umbrella of health insurance in Egypt, apart from a few institutions that offer some coverage for their employees. The vast majority of people with diabetes have their diabetes care via the private sector, with no unified registries of health plans implemented."

"The mentorship is really great," says Dr. Yeung, who presented her research on gender differences in diabetes knowledge and medication adherence at the Etwiler Scholars Alumni Program in 2018. "I take a think-global, act-local approach to my work," she explains and goes on to describe how she asks of herself: "How do I build my sphere of influences locally by learning from the people at IDC who show novel ways of doing things?"

Program Evaluation—What Makes Rising Stars a Success

The 10th Rising Stars Program along with the Etwiler Scholars Alumni Program held in Berlin, September 2018, is a testament of its enduring success—and growth. Yet its mission and foundational partnership point to the underlying reasons behind the success.

Providing the best possible care

"We've been doing the program for 10 years and seen amazing changes in medications and technology," says Dr. Bergenstal. "It's fun to talk about those advances, yet we've always emphasized it's all about the Etwiler patient-centered approach. It's still how you approach each individual, what's right for them, how to encourage them to do the best they can—that comes through all the excitement of clinical advances."

Getting the logistics pulled together for the program are a challenge acknowledges Dr. Bergenstal. However, Jane Norstrom, manager IDC International Training, says, "It is my great pleasure to work with colleagues—now considered friends—from around the world to develop the program materials as well as decide room configurations, food, travel and other logistics issues. We work really well together."

Rising Stars has also brought great personal meaning for Dr. Bergenstal in helping build the next generation of diabetes experts. "As different as

"As always, a well organized and excellent quality meeting. Very relaxed environment for learning, too."

countries are," he says, "we face the same challenges that living with diabetes poses. Living with diabetes is hard all around the world. Caring for diabetes has to be a passion. Clinicians need to care about getting it right—it's our job to help them. It's interesting to see participants eager to figure it out, as well as help their careers do better. They are really motivated. Similar to IDC's mission, they want to provide the best possible care."

Connecting across the globe

The intellectual curiosity (networking over the years on hot topics) and mentoring and sharing (via expert opinion and talking about research with faculty) is the bedrock of the Rising Stars' success, according to Dr. Simonson, who also is assistant professor at the University of Minnesota Medical School (Minneapolis). Key, too, however, says Dr. Simonson, is the international focus (showing the world can work together). Providing continuity and flexibility for the Rising Stars' participation (at any time) as relevant to their current clinical practice and research is important, too.

"Diabetes care does vary globally given resources," notes Dr. Bergenstal. "The Rising Stars always want to be up on the latest, what is the best way to deal with a current situation. But they also don't want to just be satisfied with that. It means a lot to see these people, especially the scholars, get to know one another, see them at other meetings, be in contact and share; to see this core of people have this commitment."

“Very useful insight into the exciting research advances in diabetes.”

An evolving partnership and program

“We hope this program will continue to support them for many more years ahead,” adds Dr. Bergenstal describing the program’s continued evolution, with the added alumni program years later to provide additional mentoring.

Dr. Yueng, emphasizing Dr. Bergenstal especially as a mentor, greatly appreciates the opportunity to work with him, even from afar. “I feel comfortable being in touch with the organizers,” she says, “and try and stay on top of what Dr. Bergenstal’s doing with CGM to see how I can apply it in my setting.”

Dr. Cos attributes success in part to the program’s evolution. “The program is a perfect example of how to provide feedback over time,” he says. “Reshaping the program over time, with changing priorities, makes the program more interesting.” Re-acting, observing, changing and modifying the program year-to-year are important, he adds.

Second, he stresses the partnership: “Thanks to an initiative like this with unrestricted support, Sanofi’s sponsorship brings good recognition to pharma.” Noting the similar mission between Sanofi and IDC, he lauds the joint opportunity to work together to improve knowledge, share knowledge and improve the quality of patient’s lives with diabetes.

Other faculty members also attest to Rising Stars’ success. Calling the program “top tier in professional education,” Professor Owens speaks not only to the caliber of program organization but also that of the faculty.

The quality of presentations and diversity of topics, with new themes every year, contributes to the program’s success, he says. Being a part of the faculty has been a real honor, he adds, noting the opportunity to share experiences with up and coming physicians interested in diabetes care, as well as interact with IDC leadership: “It’s a privilege to enter that cohort of people whose mission is to identify future diabetes care leaders.”

Hopes for the Future—What Lies Ahead

With 10 years of success demonstrating Rising Stars’ extensive impact, hope continues with a look at goals for the next 10 years.

“I’m hoping the program continues and the ripples of influence continue to broaden,” says Dr. Bergenstal, “with Etwiler Scholars being leaders in their country, duplicating and sharing lessons learned with trainings in their country. We’ll never stop trying to see what the next component of the program will be—maybe virtual learning with video conferencing.”

In reflecting on the road traveled so far following the 10th celebration of Rising Stars in Berlin, Ms. Germe feels certain that “with new and modern technologies at our disposal” of reaching “another level and accomplishing over and above, what we may have initially dreamt of with this program.”

Professor Owens’ hopes for the program’s sustainability are to build on its strengths. “I’d like to see more equity in diabetes care globally, especially in lots of developing countries,” he says. Recommending several strategies, he suggests creating a platform to communicate among the “family” to provide more mentorship in the intervening period between programs or to simply direct people to a particular article for those that don’t have access. Or, if a clinician is doing research, to help them identify faculty to provide support if they don’t have someone local.

While the Etwiler Scholars go to IDC for an intensive week of training, Professor Owens proposes they may also benefit from placement closer to their locale, relative to their interests. “It’s important to execute what we believe our responsibilities are,” he emphasizes.

Dr. Franc echoes some of Professor Owens’ recommendations. She corresponds by e-mail with some of the Etwiler Scholars but admits that contacts are occasional outside of diabetes meetings. “I think a technological solution that would allow the group of Etwiler Scholars to easily correspond with each other and at the same time, to announce a new publication or a new study to other scholars should reinforce the cohesion of the group and the interactions between each of us.”

Nancy Etwiler concurs with her hope and trust that the Etwiler Scholars Program will thrive and continue to bring the value and inspiration that it has to many more scholars. “One logical extension,” she suggests, “might be drawing on the depth of the ‘graduate’ pool and enhancing ways for all scholars across the classes to strengthen their professional connections with each other.”

She also adds, however that the program is not just about being a scholar: “We can all learn and be inspired by each other—while learning about each other’s cultures and humanity along the way.” ■

IDC thanks Senior Coordinators Dina Melnik and Jill Haugen for their expert project management in supporting logistics for all Rising Stars and Etwiler Scholars programs over the past decade.

The Rising Stars program is supported by unrestricted educational support from Sanofi.

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Well-Being in Diabetes Care as a Clinical Goal

The Rising Stars’ successful partnership between health care and industry may serve well as a leading example in a newer, and much-needed, paradigm shift in health professional education. As public health experts increasingly promote new systems models to first reduce the incidence—rather than the prevalence—of diabetes and other chronic disease, they emphasize helping patients manage their health **and** well-being. This requires, experts recommend, investing in active community partnerships rather than clinicians operating as single stakeholders.

“The idea is,” describes Nico Pronk, PhD, MA, FACSM, FAWHP, a faculty member for the 10th Rising Stars in Berlin, as well as president of HealthPartners Institute and chief science officer, HealthPartners, Inc, “to move away from thinking diabetes can be fixed only with medical care.”

Instead, explains Dr. Pronk, who also is adjunct professor, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (Boston), “We need to consider how the way people think, feel and function affects their beliefs about whether their life has meaning and purpose. Then the economics of health and well-being justify embracing a collective, multi-community approach that includes corporations—‘civic muscle’—to address disease prevalence.”