

# Diabetes Control and Treatment a Passion for Barbara Aung, DPM

By *RODNEY PEELE*

When Barbara Aung, DPM, sees an opportunity, she takes it. Sometimes, she creates opportunities herself.

Dr. Aung, a native of Burma, always planned on being a doctor. She just didn't know what type she wanted to be until she met a podiatrist in Arizona. She was working as a nuclear medicine technologist in Tucson where a local podiatrist would send patients with diabetic wounds or bone infections to her for radiographic examinations. Dr. Aung shadowed the DPM for a week to see what podiatry was like, and before long she matriculated at the College of Podiatric Medicine and Surgery in Iowa.

After receiving her DPM in 1990, Dr. Aung returned to Tucson for a one-year preceptorship and then started to practice. Unfortunately, she didn't have enough patients to keep busy. Rather than wait for her luck to change, she used her free time to generate good will in the local medical community and general public.

"When I first started practice, I was the new kid on the block. I had time on my hands, so I went into the community to volunteer," Dr. Aung said. "I met people at the Chamber of Commerce, and learned about the Diabetes Prevention and Control Program in Arizona. It's all voluntary."

Even though many of the events and meetings took place in Phoenix—about a two-hour drive for Dr. Aung—



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she started to volunteer. Diabetes was a major concern for the large Hispanic and Native American populations in the area, which have a high prevalence of the disease. She began to meet people in other programs, and they wanted her help, too. Ever since, Dr. Aung has been deeply involved in diabetes treatment and prevention in Arizona.

After she started volunteering, Dr. Aung was named to several committees for the Arizona Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, which has disseminated treatment guidelines and now focuses on prevention. In 2000, she became chair of the Arizona Diabetes Control Council. She's also a member of the APMA Diabetes Advisory Committee (DAC) and the American Diabetes Association (ADA) National Foot Care Council.

"I'm a physician first, so I had to learn everything I could about dia-

betes—not just the foot part," said Dr. Aung, who is a primary podiatric medicine diplomate of the American Board of Primary Podiatric Medicine and Podiatric Orthopedics. "Diabetes is debilitating without prevention, and I thought podiatry could play a major role in achieving the goal of prevention. The ADA meetings are down to the molecular level, learning the science behind the disease."

While a cure remains many years down the road, Dr. Aung believes the next step is to promote prevention for patients with risk factors for the disease. The research has focused on curing type 1 diabetes, but type 2 can be prevented. "To me, that's a cure," Dr. Aung said.

Last year, the Arizona Diabetes Initiative began. The Medicare Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), formerly known as a peer review organization (PRO), collaborated with pharmaceutical companies and health insurers. Dr. Aung was asked to be the chair of the Community Linkages Committee. The pharmaceutical companies collect data, the insurers learn which beneficiaries have diabetes, and the physicians treat the patients. Some businesses are contributing by providing work-site education for employees with diabetes. Participation in this initiative has proven to benefit Dr. Aung's practice and profession.

"The other chairs are HMO directors, so I'm discussing diabetes with medical directors from around the state. The access has been wonderful," said Dr. Aung.