

Local hockey player presses leaders for diabetes support



**By
Brock Weir**

As she laces up her skates to hit the ice with the Panthers, 12-year-old Teagan Hulse is in the zone.

A passionate athlete, who also counts volleyball, basketball, soccer and archery among her hobbies, she knows what she has to do when she glides out there with her teammates, but she's also all too conscious of what she has to do off the ice to maintain her stamina and focus.

Teagan doesn't quite remember all the details of being diagnosed with Type One diabetes while on vacation at the age of five, but the big things stick with her.

She remembers being out mini-golfing with her parents, feeling thirsty and needing to use the bathroom more than usual. She remembers feeling not like herself. She also remembers finding herself shortly thereafter in the back of an ambulance on the way to the hospital.

As she and her parents got a handle on diabetes, something they were told would be part of their new normal as a family, they also got a handle on how to be advocates for both Teagan and the countless others living with the disease around the world and particularly at home.

Despite her age, Teagan is a passionate advocate for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) and brought her

message to the Aurora Public Library last week where she pressed local leaders, including Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev, Mayor Tom Mrakas, and Newmarket Mayor John Taylor for their support in the JDRF's Access for All campaign.

The JDRF's Access for All Campaign is a push for affordable and accessible coverage for everyone living with Type One diabetes and, in particular, fighting for coverage of new technologies designed to help individuals living with the disease monitor their blood sugars, including Continuous Glucose Monitors (CGM), which, as the name suggests, maintains a continual read of blood sugars and alerts the user if there is an issue, and Flash Glucose Monitors (FGM), which allows the user to get quick readings from a small sensor implanted in the arm.

The aim of the campaign, according to the foundation, is to 'reduce out of pocket costs for these technologies and make them affordable for Canadians with Type One' and, in the process, help relieve some of the strain 'and public money spent' on the healthcare system.

'When I got back [from that trip] I was only in Kindergarten, so I had a nurse come and check on me two times a day,' Teagan shared with local leaders and residents. 'Since I was diagnosed so young, I couldn't do my finger puncture injections by myself and had to have help, but my nurse helped me to do my first finger poke and injection by myself. Even though I have Type One, I am still very active, I play rep hockey, school volleyball, basketball and sometimes soccer. I play spring floor hockey, love skiing and waterskiing, swimming' and at diabetes camp I have learned archery and how to mountain bike. Like every 12-year-old, I love to go out with my friends but with Type One, it is hard sometimes to do these things. When my sugars go too high or low, it can arise very severe consequences.

'Diabetes is with me 24/7, 365. It doesn't stop when I sleep, it doesn't take a break when I go on vacation; it is always there, like an uninvited guest who never leaves.'

Yet, Teagan says living with a CGM has helped she and her family better handle this uninvited guest and everything that comes with it, including affording her a greater level of privacy when dealing with some societal attitudes.

'While I didn't mind lifting my shirt up to inject insulin in my belly before I ate when I was little,' she recalled, 'it sometimes bothered other people. I got lots of weird looks and someone even asked my mom to take me to the bathroom and inject instead of staying at our table at our restaurant. Isn't that just ridiculous?'

The CGM, she added, 'has saved my life on more than one occasion.'

Teagan was joined at the podium by Dr.

Nancy Tout, Head of Research & Development for Syngenta Canada. Dr. Tout is not only a researcher into treatments for people living with diabetes, but also mother to a son, Alex, who was diagnosed with diabetes at the age of two.

At the start of this month, Dr. Tout's son, now 19, went off to post-secondary education, a nerve-racking milestone for any family, but many of her worries have been tempered, she said, knowing that her son's blood glucose levels are being closely monitored.

"Playing the role of his pancreas has been my most challenging role I have ever had to take on, beyond any of the science I have taken," she said, noting the help she had to provide her son early on with his insulin injections.

Governments stepping in to provide coverage for CGMs and FGMs is an essential step forward, she said.

"It is really the next step? and it is not even the next step; we're a step behind," she said. "This technology has been available and it has the ability to really advance how people manage their Type One diabetes. Better control, better outcomes, reduced hospital visits, and more data is just better to make better decisions and government reimbursement is key to all this.

"I feel pretty blessed and lucky to have a great job, as does my husband. We have coverage, we have access to all the technology we can for Alex to have better outcomes, and I would offer up that the future of this technology is to be able to take it to the next step and these technologies are going to be working together."

For more information on the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, and to learn more about their #AccessForAll campaign, visit jdrf.ca.