

PARTNERING FOR CHANGE

Chronic Care in Humanitarian Crises



BOUCHRA SAID
BEKAA VALLEY, LEBANON

Bouchra is 26 years old and has type 1 diabetes. She is a refugee from Syria and now lives in Lebanon.

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Patient profile

Bouchra has type 1 diabetes

When she was younger, Bouchra Said dreamt of studying English at university. Now, at the age of 26, she finds herself supporting a disabled father and four school-aged siblings in a foreign country where she has overstayed her permit. These burdens are compounded by constant concern about her blood glucose levels.

In 2011, after gradually losing a lot of weight, 18-year-old Bouchra was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at a hospital in Eastern Al Ghouta in Syria. At the time, Bouchra and her family knew little about type 1 diabetes, but the doctor explained that it was a chronic condition that would require her to take daily insulin injections for the rest of her life. In Syria, Bouchra was provided with free insulin, and, with the help of a neighbourhood nurse, she learnt how to self-inject.

However, the war in Syria forced Bouchra to flee to Lebanon with her mother and younger siblings. They left in a taxi with none of their belongings as they thought their stay would be brief. Four years later, Bouchra and her siblings are still living in Barja, Lebanon. Their mother, who took care of the whole family, recently passed away unexpectedly, leaving Bouchra as the sole breadwinner.

Here in Lebanon, Bouchra has to pay for her medication and she cannot afford the prescribed medical tests, which means that she has not always managed to control her blood glucose levels well. After being hospitalised due to life-threatening diabetic ketoacidosis, Bouchra managed to borrow a glucometer as she could not afford to purchase one. Without a glucometer and certain medical tests, Bouchra could end up in a coma or suffer from debilitating diabetes-related complications.

Bouchra doesn't want her neighbours or employers to know that she has type 1 diabetes, which means support is scarce. While she might be able to receive free treatment at a medical centre in Hussainia, the cost of travel and equipment is prohibitive.

"After my mother died, I worried about taking care of my brothers and sisters. The doctor told me about some medical tests that need to be done, but I do not have enough money to do these medical tests."

PROFILE DETAILS

Name

Bouchra Said

Age at time of interview

26-years-old (April 2019)

Location

Barja, Lebanon

Country of origin

Syria

Year of leaving country of origin

2015

Type of diabetes

Type 1 diabetes

Year of diagnosis

2011

Diabetes-related complications

None mentioned

Occupation

She is employed at a company that specialises in tea, coffee and cleaning services

