

## **ISPAD Allan Drash Fellowship Report**

Recipient: Mehak Dhingra

Year Awarded: 2024

Host Center: Royal London Hospital

Mentor: Dr. Ruben H. Willemsen

Duration of fellowship: 19th Feb 2025 to 14th March 2024

### **Report**

I feel deeply honoured and grateful to have been awarded the Allan Drash Clinical Fellowship at the Royal London Hospital, under the supervision of Dr. Ruben H. Willemsen, made possible through the generous support of ISPAD and JDRF. I extend my heartfelt thanks to both organisations for providing the financial assistance that enabled me to undertake this invaluable opportunity.

The fellowship was a journey that took me from the very basics to advanced levels of diabetes care. One of the highlights was learning how to structure and manage a multidisciplinary diabetes team, understanding the roles of each specialist, how to divide responsibilities, and how to organise patient time effectively without overlap or confusion. This structured approach to teamwork left a lasting impression on me.

The warm and welcoming approach of the diabetes nurses ensured I had an open and enriching learning experience throughout my stay. They encouraged me to shadow them across different clinics, especially those involving complex or unique patient cases. Their patience, willingness to answer all my questions, and provision of detailed handouts made my learning process both practical and comprehensive. I also had the opportunity to observe more than five doctors' clinics, which exposed me to a variety of patient care styles and practices.

I also had the privilege of assisting the diabetes nurses over their 3 allotted centers Whipps Cross Hospital, Newham University Hospital, and the Royal London Hospital, I experienced the diversity of hospital cultures and systems. I attended the monthly Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meetings and the weekly Wednesday Psychosocial meetings, where the entire MDT sat together to discuss patient cases in detail. On Thursdays, I joined the nurse-led clinics

without doctors present which highlighted how nurses independently led consultations, helped children feel comfortable, and provided holistic support. Attending the Teen Clinic gave me valuable insights into adolescent-specific care strategies.

The fellowship also introduced me to closed-loop insulin pumps and pump training sessions, which was a new and eye-opening experience. I learned about different pump models, their construction, and how to choose the most suitable device for a patient an area of care I believe is revolutionary and should be made accessible to every child with diabetes worldwide.

I had the privilege of working closely with several esteemed clinicians:

- **Dr. Prateek** – Endocrinology Clinic
- **Dr. Nikki** – Teen Clinic
- **Dr. Evelyn** – Type 2 Diabetes Clinic
- **Dr. Ashraff** – MDT Clinic
- **Dr. Ruben** – Transition Clinic
- **Dr. Prab** – MDT Clinic, where I observed children with special conditions alongside Type 1 diabetes

Through these experiences, I gained a comprehensive understanding of follow-up procedures, teleconsultations, and the management of newly diagnosed patients. I was especially struck by how every member of the team engaged with families proactively and empathetically, answering questions with patience, ensuring families were confident, and placing a strong emphasis on diabetes self-management.

To summarise, my time working with the multidisciplinary team at the Royal London Hospital was truly enlightening. I returned with a wealth of knowledge about diabetes care and other professional insights. I am sincerely appreciative of Dr. Ruben, Dr. Nikki, Dr. Evelyn, Dr. Ashraff, Dr. Prateek, Dr. Prab, and the entire Royal London team of diabetes nurses, dietitians, and psychologists for broadening my perspective and strengthening my education in diabetes management. I am also profoundly thankful to JDRF and ISPAD for enabling me to pursue this fellowship. These experiences, under the guidance of exceptional faculty, have equipped me with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to continue enhancing the lives of individuals living with diabetes in India.