

Tuesday 16 July 2019

Special medals presented during National Diabetes Week

At a special award ceremony in Melbourne's CBD today, Diabetes Victoria has acknowledged 55 Victorians who have lived with diabetes for at least 50 years, as part of National Diabetes Week (14–20 July). All of these 55 Victorians will receive *Kellion Victory Medals* – 46 who have lived with diabetes for 50 years, four for 60 years, four for 70 years and one for an impressive 75 years.

“Recent changes and improvements in diabetes management and technology are simply astounding. Equally as astounding is the determination, resilience, focus and courage that all *Kellion Victory Medallists* have shown during their long lives with diabetes,” said Diabetes Victoria CEO Craig Bennett. “I congratulate all of our recipients for their outstanding accomplishment. They all deserve our utmost respect and admiration.”

Less than 100 years ago, type 1 diabetes was essentially a death sentence: half of the people who developed the condition died within two years and more than 90% were dead within five years.¹ Thanks to the introduction of insulin therapy in the 1920s, and numerous advances since then, the long-term outlook for those with type 1 diabetes has dramatically improved over the decades.²

Even today, there is no cure yet for type 1 diabetes. Diagnosed at age 12 in 1959, Judith Ann Thynne is proud to have reached the milestone of having lived with type 1 diabetes for 60 years. As far as her diabetes goes, Ms Thynne feels very lucky and has had a happy and fortunate life. “Do the best you can, it’s worth it,” is her advice for living a long and healthy life with diabetes. “It’s up to you. If you do not make your own personal effort, nothing will help.”

People with type 1 diabetes need to take insulin via injections or an insulin pump every day for the rest of their lives. They have to check their blood glucose levels many times every day because their immune system has mistakenly attacked and destroyed the cells in the pancreas that make insulin. Insulin is needed to get blood sugar (glucose) into cells for energy. Without insulin, glucose builds up in the bloodstream, damaging cells and tissues throughout the body over time.

While insulin therapy allows a person with type 1 diabetes to stay alive, it does not cure the condition, nor necessarily prevent health complications, which may include: kidney failure, blindness, nerve damage, heart attack, stroke and pregnancy complications.

¹Source: Harvard Health Publications.

²An Australian study has found that diabetes results in a modest reduction in life expectancy (3.1 years for women and 3.2 years for men) and a substantial reduction in disability-free life expectancy (9.1 years for women, 8.2 years for men) in Australian adults. Source: Huo L et al. (2016). Burden of diabetes in Australia: life expectancy and disability-free life expectancy in adults with diabetes. *Diabetologia*, July 2016, Volume 59, Issue 7, pp1437-1445.



MEDIA RELEASE

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About *Kellion Victory Medals*

Kellion Victory Medals honour the lives of people who have lived with diabetes for many decades – which is an outstanding achievement. Australia's *Kellion Victory Medals* were named in honour of the late Mr Claude Kellion AM, a Sydney businessman who established a foundation to promote diabetes research after his son died, aged 38, from diabetes-related complications.

Kellion Victory Medals have been awarded since 1984 in Australia. All Australians who have lived with diabetes for 50 years or more are eligible for a *Kellion Victory Medal*. More information is available here: <http://bit.ly/kellion>

We **support, empower** and **campaign for** all Victorians affected by, or at risk of, diabetes.

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