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Celebrating 2620 years of living with diabetes during National Diabetes Week

During this year's National Diabetes Week (8–14 July), Diabetes Victoria has awarded *Kellion Victory Medals* to 47 Victorians who have lived with the condition for more than 50 years. Together, the *2018 Kellion Victory Medallists* have clocked up a staggering 2620 years living with diabetes.

Less than 100 years ago, type 1 diabetes was 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

“There is no cure yet for type 1 diabetes; however, recent changes and improvements in diabetes management and technology are astounding. Equally as astounding are the determination, resilience, focus and courage that all *Kellion Victory Medallists* have shown during their long life with diabetes,” says Diabetes Victoria CEO Craig Bennett. “I congratulate all of our recipients for this outstanding accomplishment. They all deserve our utmost respect and admiration.”

Diabetes management has indeed come a long way since *Kellion Victory Medallist* Diana Snape was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at age 11 in 1948. “I am amazed I survived those early years. There was no support at all and no social awareness of the condition,” Diana remembers.

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 multiple times every day because their immune system 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, this damages cells and tissues throughout the body over time.

“My first diabetes specialist told me I would need good luck and good management to survive more than 10 years,” Diana says proudly. The Balwyn resident and retired high school teacher believes her science training has been helpful in proving this prognosis wrong and living well with the condition for 70 years. “Managing your diabetes carefully is essential. If you do this, you can be as healthy as anyone else and you can lead a full, active and enjoyable life,” Diana says.

¹ Source: Harvard Health Publications.

² An 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.



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

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 Medal* was 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 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 diabetes.

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