Diabetes is rising at an alarming rate

Diabetes is rising at an alarming rate. This was the message provided by Dr. Tanat Wongchinsri, M.D. to the Pattaya City Expats Club at their Sunday, June 17 meeting. After announcing that Phayathai Hospital Sriracha had a nurse providing free blood pressure checks for everyone, Master of Ceremonies Richard Silverberg called on fellow member Gavin Waddell, international marketing executive for the hospital, to introduce Dr. Tanat.

Dr. Tanat began by explaining how the body uses sugar. When we eat food, it is broken down and used by the body for energy. When food is digested, a sugar called glucose enters the bloodstream which is a fuel for the body. Within the body, the pancreas is an organ that makes insulin. Insulin is a hormone that controls blood sugar to move it from the bloodstream into cells where it can be used as fuel.

Diabetes, he explained, is a disease in which there are high levels of sugar in the blood which is caused by too little insulin, a resistance to insulin, or both.

The two major types of diabetes are called Type 1

Fellow member Jerry Dean advises PCEC members of the efforts of the Pattaya 'Friends of Youth' to enrich the lives of Pattaya’s less fortunate orphans and street children. Friends of Youth activities include fishing days, bowling, and also shopping days for what we normally regard as essentials, and also the occasional treat.

Type 2 diabetes makes up most of diabetes cases and occurs when cells fail to use insulin properly. Many people with type 2 diabetes do not know they have it.

Using a chart, Dr. Tanat showed that in 2003, about 5.1% of the world’s population had diabetes; which was projected to be 6.3% by 2026. In Thailand, he said, the rate is 10.8% meaning that one in ten have some form of diabetes.

High blood sugar levels can cause several symptoms. He mentioned blurred vision, excessive thirst, fatigue, frequent urination, hunger, and weight loss. However, because type 2 diabetes develops slowly, some people with high blood sugar are asymptomatic (have no symptoms). These people are usually diagnosed as the result of a blood test.

Glucose levels are usually measured in mg per deciliter and Dr. Tanat said that diagnosis of diabetes should be based on the results of at least two blood tests; not just one. The amount of glucose indicating diabetes differs depending on whether you have or have not eaten within a specified period of time.

If you have a fasting blood glucose level higher than 126 mg/dl twice, then you are considered to have diabetes; if it is between 100 and 126 you are considered to be impaired.

There is no cure for diabetes. Treatment involves medicines, diet, and exercise to control blood sugar and prevent symptoms and problems. If you have diabetes and it is not adequately controlled, you have a significantly higher risk of developing complications. Long term complications can be cardiovascular disease, retinal damage, chronic kidney failure, nerve damage, poor healing of wounds, and gangrene on the feet which may lead to amputation.

MC Richard then updated everyone on upcoming events and called on Roy Albiston to conduct the always interesting and lively Open Forum where questions are asked and answered about expat living in Thailand, Pattaya in particular.

The Pattaya City Expats Club meets every Sunday at the Amari Orchid’s Tavern by the Sea Restaurant. Read more about the Club’s activities on their website at www.pattayaicityexpatsclub.com.