

JOURNEY TO SUGARLAND: KNOWLEDGE MAKES YOU FREE

Project developed by

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Introduction

This project originated from an innovative idea by Dr. Maria Antonella Ferraro to introduce children to the world of diabetes and healthy eating habits through the adventures of Marco and his faithful friend, Micro.

The initiative serves as an educational tool designed to increase awareness among young readers about diabetes management and the prevention of diseases associated with unhealthy lifestyles, particularly physical inactivity and obesity. The prevalence of obesity among young people has reached alarming levels in Italy and is especially concerning in the Calabria region.

Diabetes, a chronic condition characterized by elevated blood glucose levels, has been known since ancient times. Although there is currently no definitive cure, effective treatments are available to help individuals achieve optimal glycemic control and live well with the condition.

The severity of diabetes, its progression over time, and the response to treatment vary from person to person. Today, advances in diabetes care allow people living with diabetes to lead lives that are very close to normal. However, accurate information and education remain essential to overcoming misconceptions and eliminating unnecessary limitations.

Successful diabetes management requires knowledge, awareness, self-management skills, and informed decision-making. The guiding principle is simple: **Monitor, Understand, and Act.**

Living with diabetes requires active daily engagement. Maintaining blood glucose levels within target ranges is a continuous challenge that demands commitment, resilience, and determination. Yet it is also a source of achievement and empowerment—every day of successful self-management represents a personal victory.

Proper nutrition is one of the cornerstones of diabetes education and management, both in the short and long term. Learning healthy eating habits, understanding food choices, and recognizing appropriate portion sizes are fundamental steps toward disease prevention and the promotion of physical and psychological well-being, regardless of whether a person has diabetes.

Through this journey, Marco guides readers in discovering healthy nutrition, modern diabetes technologies, and carbohydrate counting (CHO counting).

Methods

An educational comic book was developed for use in schools. The program includes classroom-based educational sessions supported by PowerPoint presentations, videos, and distribution of the comic book to students.

Conclusions

When individuals with diabetes receive appropriate education and training in healthy nutrition, blood glucose monitoring, and carbohydrate counting, they are better able to match insulin doses to their meals. This promotes effective glycemic management, improves quality of life, and enables people to live with diabetes in a more independent and fulfilling way.