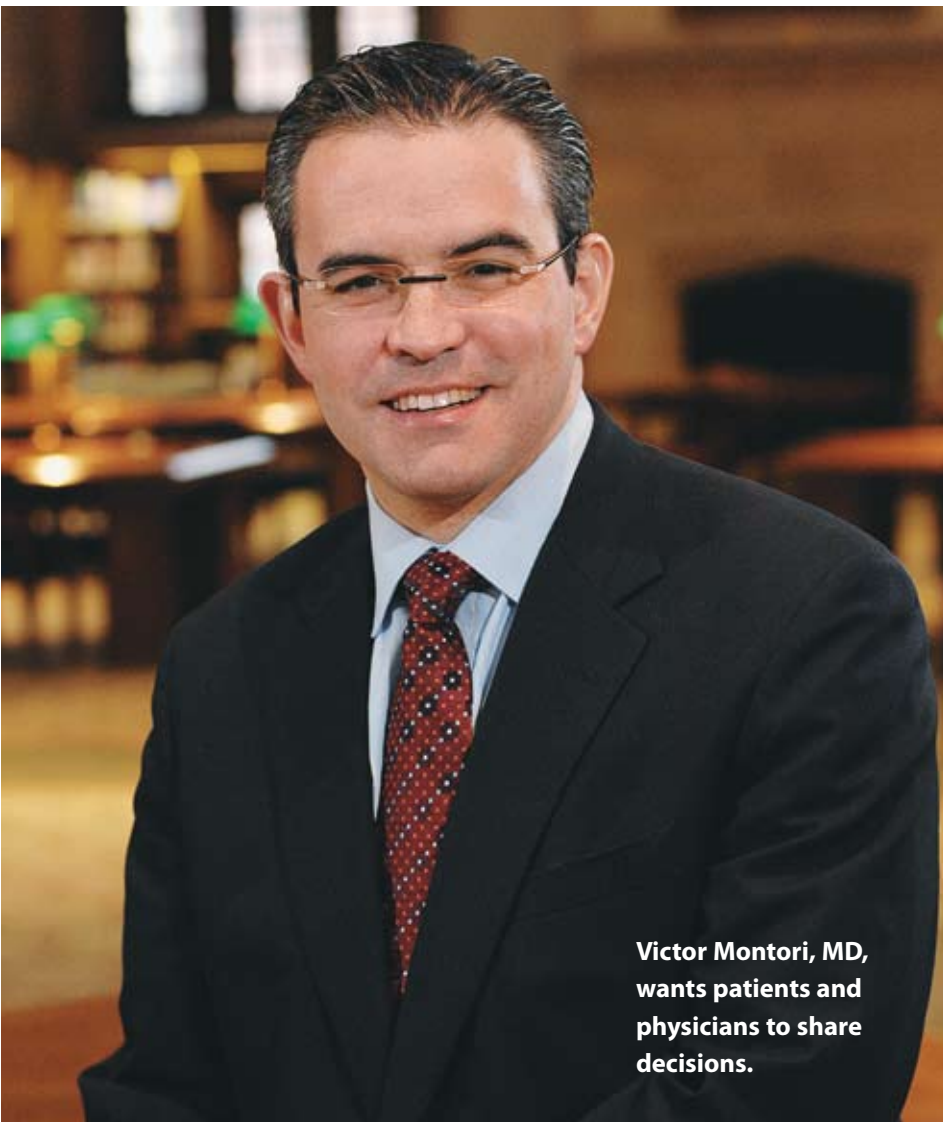


CANDID CONVERSATIONS

Patients And Physicians Collaborate



Victor Montori, MD,
wants patients and
physicians to share
decisions.

VICTOR MONTORI, MD

Occupation

Associate Professor of Medicine,
Mayo Clinic College of
Medicine, Rochester, Minn.

Focus

Diabetes care

Research Funding

American Diabetes Association
Clinical Research Award

People with type 2 diabetes have more medications to choose from than ever before. Yet these choices can be overwhelming, and discussing these options in a meaningful way with your physician can be daunting.

Enter Victor Montori, MD, who is working to put the patient in the driver's seat.

Montori and his team have developed a guide to help physicians and patients talk about treatment decisions for type 2 diabetes. He is an endocrinologist at the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine in Minnesota.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICK MADSEN

Patients First

“Often, patients aren’t informed about treatment options. These decisions are their physicians’, and not their own,” says Montori.

For example, many physicians delay telling their patients with type 2 diabetes about starting insulin. It’s seen as a last resort, he says. A physician may have preconceived notions about a patient’s aversion to needles. Or a physician may see it as more work than prescribing a regimen of diabetes pills.

Montori’s idea is to put patients at the center of discussing and choosing their medications. The more involved patients are, he says, the more likely they are to follow through with their choices and take their medications over time.

In Your Hands

Montori and his colleagues at the Mayo Clinic have developed a guide for physicians to listen to patients’ priorities about medications and then present the pros and cons of different treatment options. They’ve done this using a grant from the American Diabetes Association.

To sponsor an ADA research project at the Research Foundation’s Pinnacle Society level of \$10,000 or more, call Elly Brtva, MPH, managing director of Individual Giving, at (703) 253-4377, or e-mail her at ebrtva@diabetes.org.



The guide consists of six cards. Each card briefly describes an aspect of diabetes care: weight change, low blood glucose, daily routine, daily monitoring, side effects, and blood glucose control.

The physician uses the cards when the patient and physician are discussing new treatment options. For example, a patient wants to bring her blood glucose levels down, but her current regimen of metformin isn’t working well. She’d like to try something else.

The physician presents the cards to the patient and asks: Which aspect of your care would you like to talk about first?

After selecting a card, the patient and physician discuss how various treatments, such as insulin, diabetes pills, or other medications like exenatide, stack up. The patient continues to select cards and talk with the physician until they’ve discussed different aspects of treatments such as effectiveness, side effects, and daily routines.

“All of a sudden you’re having a nuanced conversation that the patient drives,” he explains. The physician informs the patient and facilitates the decision. The cards help patients factor in lifestyle choices and take an active role in selecting a treatment.

Study Status

Montori and his colleagues are recruiting physicians from clinics in Minnesota to participate in the study. They expect to involve 20 to 30 physicians and their patients. Half of the physicians will use the decision guide and half will not.

Then the researchers will use surveys of both physicians and patients to measure satisfaction with and without the guide. Some of the criteria will include uncertainty or conflict about choices, if using the guide took too long, and if treatment decisions were easier with or without the guide.

Improving Care

Montori says the ADA research grant has afforded him a unique opportunity to pursue research dedicated to improving patients’ quality of life.

“I am not going to find a cure for diabetes. I am not going to find the latest protein or gene,” says Montori. “I’m trying to do research to improve the quality of care that people with diabetes deserve.”