Script for Patients Who Fear Insulin: Myth or Reality

1. Q: Having to take insulin means I have failed and that my diabetes is getting worse.

A: Myth
   No, you haven't failed at all. Diabetes is a disease that gets harder to manage over time as the pancreas makes less and less insulin. Adding insulin isn't a sign of failure. It replaces what your body isn't making naturally to help control blood glucose. If diet, exercise, and oral diabetes medications are not bringing your blood glucose levels under control, insulin will help. Insulin is an important tool in effectively managing diabetes, which is important to your overall health.

2. Q: Insulin should be considered as a last option for treating diabetes.

A: Myth
   Insulin does not have to be the last option you and your provider consider. Your guide should be your A1C level. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) suggests your level should be less than 7%. If it is above that – or above the goal your provider set for you – ask your provider about insulin. You want to be on the most effective medication.

3. Q: Taking insulin can be as routine as brushing your teeth.

A: Reality
   Many people fear that taking insulin will interfere with their daily schedules. But patients on insulin often say that their routines have not changed much since starting insulin.

4. Q: Taking insulin injections will be painful.

A: Myth
   Many patients are surprised when they see how small and thin the needle is. Also, many types of insulin come in small, easy to use insulin pens that make taking insulin more convenient.

5. Q: Insulin may be started at any time to help control your blood glucose.

A: Reality
   Yes, Insulin may be started at any time. Insulin does not mean that you are "at the end of the road." In fact, the ADA treatment guidelines suggest you add insulin earlier if diet, exercise, and pills alone do not offer enough blood glucose control. Insulin does not have to be the last option. It is an effective option.
6. Q: Insulin will make me gain a lot of weight.

A: Myth
The benefit of helping to manage your blood sugar with insulin outweighs the risk of some weight gain. Some people find that they do put on a few pounds when they begin taking insulin. But following a meal plan and exercise program may help. Taking the right amount of insulin and the right amount of food is the best way to manage weight. If you need more help to know the “right” amount of insulin and the “right” amount of food, ask to see a diabetes educator.

7. Q: Insulin is dangerous.

A: Myth
All medicines have some side effects. The most common side effect of insulin is low blood glucose. Proper use of insulin may help reduce the risk of side effects. So let me help you learn how to take your insulin so that you don’t have low blood glucose.

8. Q: Insulin doesn’t cure diabetes.

A: Reality
Taking insulin may help manage diabetes. But it does not cure diabetes. While progress toward finding a cure has been substantial, there is still no cure for diabetes.

9. Q: Insulin always needs to be refrigerated.

A: Myth
It is best to keep the insulin you are using at room temperature. Many people keep the insulin they are using at room temperature because they find it more comfortable to inject. Once opened, insulin can be stored at room temperature from 10 to 42 days. The insulin you are not using needs to be stored in the refrigerator. Refrigerated, unopened bottles are good until the expiration date printed on them. Always read the instructions that come with your insulin.

10. Q: Once I start taking insulin I will get addicted to it and will have to take it for the rest of my life.

A. Myth
Insulin is not physically addictive or habit forming. Some patients choose to take insulin to help manage their blood glucose. This does not mean they are addicted. They are replacing something the body once made naturally. If your body does not make insulin, you will need to take insulin for the rest of your life.