

## Novo Nordisk Defends Choice of Paula Deen as Diabetes Spokesperson

The Celebrity is the Message

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Unless you are living under a rock on the Moon, you've probably heard that Novo Nordisk has teamed up with celebrity Southern-style chef Paula Deen as a paid spokesperson.

You also probably know that Deen has Type 2 diabetes and that Novo makes a drug to treat that condition and that Deen is currently taking that drug.

And you must know that Novo Nordisk and Deen have taken a lot of heat—eg, bad publicity—about this new relationship.

What you may not have heard or known about, however, is the name of the drug that Deen is being paid to promote, how it works, and whether it is effective.

The drug is Victoza, a once-daily, non-insulin injection that may improve blood sugar levels in adults with Type 2 diabetes when used along with diet and exercise.

We also do not know if all the bad publicity has helped or hurt Novo's efforts to promote its new "Diabetes in a New Light" website, which features new, diabetes-friendly recipes from Deen and her sons, Bobby and Jamie.

**Drug Sites Engage in Diabetes Diet Battle**

My Twitter friend, @serious\_skeptic, who has Type 1 diabetes, tweeted: "why the hell would anyone want a recipe from a DRUG company anyway???"

In fact, Novo's deal with Deen propels the company into a crowded diabetes recipe battlefield. At least three other major pharmaceutical companies tout "diabetes-friendly" recipes, including Merck, which markets Januvia, and Bristol-Myers Squibb/Astrazeneca, which together market Onglyza. Those drug Web sites and Novo's Victoza site were the top three Google paid search results on "diabetes certified recipe." See Figure 1, below.

What Victoza, Onglyza, and Januvia have in common is they all treat Type 2 diabetes, not Type 1. It's almost as if these companies are competing based on which one offers the best diets rather than the most effective diabetes treatment! Novo just trumped the competition on that score by signing on a celebrity chef, which none of the others has done as yet.

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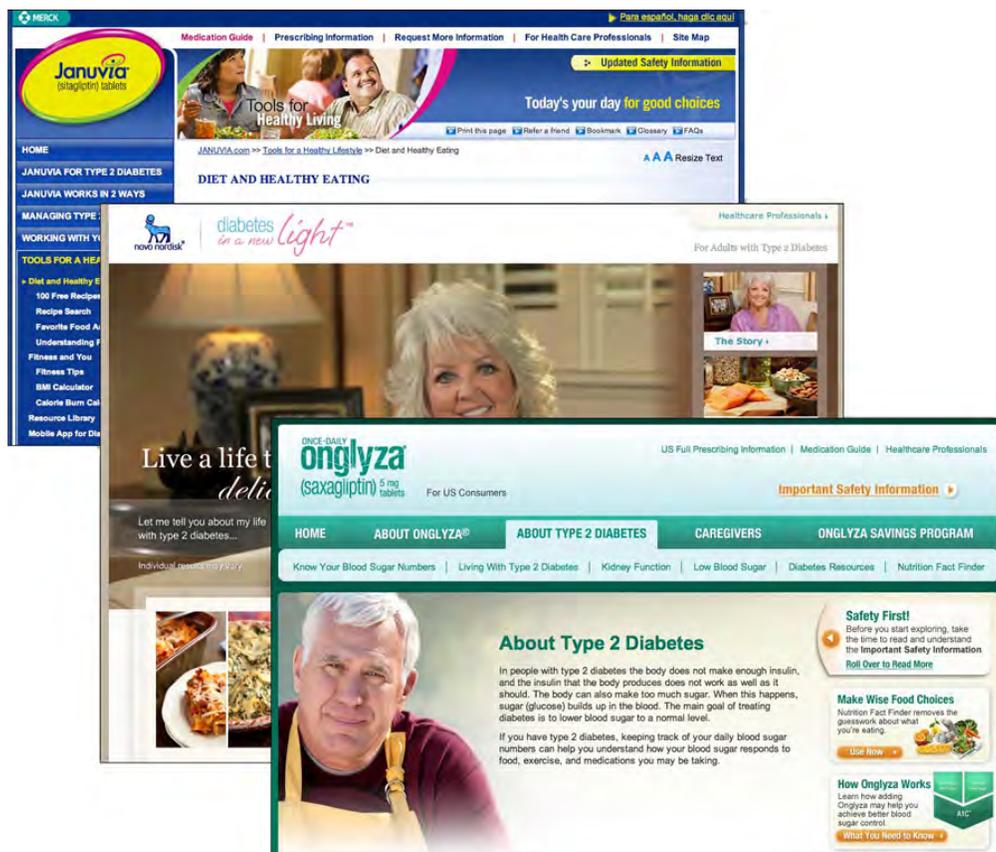


Figure 1. Junivia, Onglyza, and Victoza. All sponsor diabetes-friendly recipes.

### Novo Must Ditch Deen, Says Kliff

Novo Nordisk has been taking it on the chin for promoting a spokesperson who many people believe is not a good role model for people with Type 2 diabetes.

David Kliff of Diabetic Investor said that Novo “could care less. This shows they have no scruples. You know, you can’t grow a conscience. And if they had one, they would have disassociated themselves from her as quickly as possible. This is a company that’s devoted its entire corporate life to helping patients with diabetes, but now they’re bastardizing themselves and in the long run, this will backfire on them” (see “Novo Must Get Rid Of Paula Deen: Kliff Explains”; <http://bit.ly/wjRwrG>).

### Interview with Novo Nordisk’s Ambre Morley

Considering all the bad publicity, I asked Ambre Morley, Associate Director, Product Communications, Novo Nordisk, to be a guest on Pharma Marketing Talk where she answered my questions about why her company teamed up with Deen as a spokesperson.

The following questions/topics were discussed during the interview;

- Why did Novo Nordisk decide to work with Paula Deen as a spokesperson? Did she or her agents approach you? Give us the history of how this relationship came to be.
- Doesn't her "baggage" of being a chef who features foods like a fried-egg bacon burger on a glazed doughnut bun make her a questionable spokesperson for type 2 diabetes for which fatty, sugary diets are a known risk factor? I note that 80% (305) readers polled by the WSJ Blog say that Deen is NOT a good choice as a pharma-industry spokeswoman for diabetes awareness. What do you say to that?
- You said that Deen is using Victoza. Can you tell us how long Ms. Deen has been on Victoza?
- Will Deen—like racecar Charlie Kimball, another Novo Nordisk paid diabetes spokesperson—tweet about her treatment (branded or otherwise)?
- Now that Deen is a paid spokesperson, how does Novo Nordisk review or approve what she says on shows like the *Today Show* where she claimed that she has always recommended to her fans to eat “in moderation”? It doesn't appear that she has given that advice in the video shown on this page. Generally, what control does Novo Nordisk have over what Deen says from now on about diabetes, her recipes, and her treatment?
- Are decisions to hire celebrities made solely by the marketing team or is upper management required to sign-off on such deals?
- How much is Paula Deen and her sons being paid by Novo Nordisk?

The following is a synopsis of that interview, lightly edited to make for better reading. You can listen to the entire interview in the podcast “Novo Nordisk And Paula Deen: Why?” (<http://bit.ly/PMT156>).

**John Mack:** "Why did Novo Nordisk decide to work with Paula Deen as a spokesperson? Did she or her agents approach you?"



**Ambre Morley:** “Actually, no. I'll give you the honest to God answer on how this happened. My group supports all of the product the brand teams here and we had actually come up with a few different ideas for how we wanted to

help people tackle some of the daily challenges of having diabetes and one of those was dinner. So back in January or February of last year, we started working on plans to take really good recipes, change them, and have them certified by dieticians to make it easy for people with diabetes to have meals that they love and that taste good too.”

**JM:** “As one commenter said on the Diabetes Mine Blog: ‘Surely the drug companies could choose spokesmen who are role models for their community.’ Why, for example, did Novo Nordisk choose Paula Deen, noted for her fatty, calorie-rich recipes, versus Mario Batali or Anthony Bourdain, both of whom are celebrity chefs with shows on TV (although not necessarily better ‘role models’)?”

**AM:** “We started looking at different ways and different chefs that we could approach to help us promote this campaign and to bring some visibility to it, to show people that they too could make these really good dishes at home.

“Honest to God, Paula Deen popped into my head. I was sitting with the person who is responsible for Victoza Communications on my team. We were going through our list and we said, you know, what about Paula Deen? How cool would it be to challenge Paula to change up some of her famously, tasty, and butter-rich, and really unhealthy recipes, and to have her work with a dietician and make them diabetes-friendly and also taste good?”

*Continues...*

**Side Note:** It was probably not much of a challenge to come up with more healthy Deen-inspired recipes as long as her two sons were thrown into the deal. Bobby and Jamie have broken with their “mama” and have their own Food Channel show titled *Not My Mamma's Meals*. Deen tries to promote her sons every chance she gets. On the *Today Show*, for example, she tried to do it at the end of the interview but Al Roker cut her off (“Paula Deen: Diabetes diagnosis won't change how I cook”; <http://bit.ly/xQn7Wh>). Not a problem! Her sons are part of the deal with Novo Nordisk.

**JM:** “So, the fact that Deen had type 2 diabetes did not influence your choice?”

**AM:** “Gosh, when we called, we had no idea she had diabetes. I'm giving it to you straight and I have people who can validate my story here.”

**JM:** “First you were just looking for a chef and then now you found a chef who had diabetes. That was like hitting a gold mine!”

**AM:** “So to your point on working on this program then looking for a chef and then finding a chef that had Type 2 Diabetes, you think, oh, that's great. But we did not say, all right, home run. We said, wow, it's Paula Deen. And we really took a long and honest look at what this could mean. Obviously, it included a lot of the stuff that we see coming out today.

“Well, first off she didn't agree to do anything. It's just, ‘let's have a conversation.’ I want to make that really, really clear—her response wasn't like, ‘oh, my gosh, I'm going to do this for you guys.’ This is something we worked for a long, long time. This partnership didn't happen overnight. This wasn't like ‘slap a logo on and we're good to go.’

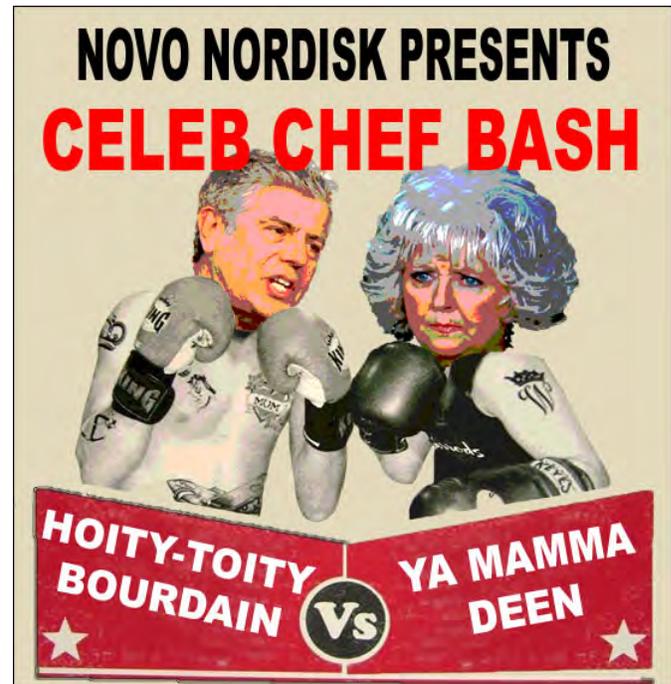
“And we took a look at what people's perceptions were of her. We took a look at really what this could mean not just for Novo Nordisk but also for her brand. We also started to see how many people could relate to her. I mean, her story is remarkable but at the same time she's maintained the sense of familiarity that so many people feel and they're endear to her.”

**JM:** “I can see where she would be someone that people could more easily relate to than a chef like Anthony Bourdain, I guess.”

### Deen Versus Bourdain

**AM:** “We were looking at chefs in New York and thinking about who would have the biggest impact on the largest number of people and someone that people would listen to. I can't say that a chef in New York, even a chef that might have had Type 2 diabetes, who

has a hoity-toity fancy restaurant would have the same impact on people that Paula Deen would. So it came down to who will the greatest number of people look at and see that person is like me or that person struggled and that person has the same problems that I do.”



**Side Note:** Chef Anthony Bourdain, who has never been a fan of Ms. Deen's, told Eater.com: “When your signature dish is hamburger in between a doughnut, and you've been cheerfully selling this stuff knowing all along that you've got Type 2 diabetes ... it's in bad taste, if nothing else”.

**JM:** “Can you tell us about the difference in incidence of Type 2 diabetes in New York City versus Savannah, Georgia? Is it very are different?”

**AM:** “Yes. Quite honestly, there is a fairly huge difference between New York and L.A. and the rest of the country quite honestly. Sometimes it's very easy to get caught up in what we know as reality, which is the northeastern part of the United States.

“When you travel to the southeast and middle America and you see the daily struggles and the daily challenges that people have when they're diagnosed with something like diabetes, the first thing that people do, they don't run out and shout and tell the world that they have it. What they do is they sit down and they feel a little bit overwhelmed. They feel like ‘what am I going to do.’ And then they try to figure it out.

*Continues...*

"I think what troubles me the most about some of the criticism of this is the fact that she took some time to try to figure it out and didn't say anything until she had a way to do it.

"If people look at the recipes on *Diabetes in a New Light* and if you look at some of the other challenges that she said she had and what changes she'd be doing to her lifestyle, I think that's where it starts to make sense. I think the initial noise is one thing but what we hope is that people will listen to everything else that this program brings."



Figure 2. Deen Prepares Hamburger-Egg-Bacon-Glazed Donut Sandwich on Food Channel

**Side Note:** It appears that Deen will NOT change her sugary, fat-laden eating habits much to encourage prevention of Type 2 diabetes (see Figure 2, above). "Type 2 diabetes is like 'Russian roulette' when it comes to whom it's going to strike, Deen says. 'It's about heredity. It's about age, lifestyle, race. I'm the only one in my family who has it. My grandmother cooked and ate like I ate, and she didn't have it. I suspect I'll stick to my roots but will say a little louder, Eat this in moderation.'"

### It's Not All About Victoza

**JM:** "Can you tell us how long she's been treated with Victoza or is this something she just started when she became a spokesperson?"

**AM:** "She's been on it since some time last year. I don't know specifically but I know she's been on it for quite some time and she's under control. So that is an important thing to say.

"And again, when we approached her, it's just so important that we share she already had diabetes and was working on managing it and working on making changes.

"For us, the fact that she does take Victoza—we're proud of that. But that's not what this is all about. You can go to victoza.com and, yes, you can see Paula Deen on that site. But this campaign is about *Diabetes in a New Light*. It's about all the other aspects of diabetes that she is working on with her sons who are the ones that helped people go with her on this journey and to get it under control."

**Side Note:** Deen has been accused of being "deceptive" because she was diagnosed with diabetes three years ago and kept on pushing "unhealthy" recipes on her Food Channel show without revealing her condition. BTW, a Novo Nordisk sponsored study shows more patients benefit from its diabetes drug Victoza when the medicine is prescribed early in the disease. Scientists delving into data from an existing study found that 72 percent of those treated early with Victoza met a target of lower blood-sugar levels, compared with 49 percent of those treated late. Hopefully, Deen will get the maximum benefit from her treatment.

### Not My Mama's Meals

**JM:** "What about Deen's sons? Are they part of the branded team?"

**AM:** "Bobby, her youngest son already had a show called *Not My Mama's Meals*. If you take a look at what Bobby and Jamie have already been doing, they've always lightened up their mother's recipes. If you visited pauladeen.com two weeks ago and found recipes, you would have seen how Jamie and Bobby make it lighter with fewer calories. And this is not anything that's new to them. That's why they agreed to do it. It was just something that they've always done."

**JM:** "I notice that in many areas of the country and I guess in New York too, that fast food restaurants are required to indicate on the menu the number of calories and other nutritional information about their dishes. Is that what you're doing on *Diabetes in a New Light* as part of the "diabetes certification?"

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**AM:** “We’ve already certified them. We worked with the American Dietetic Association’s Diabetes Care and Education group. So, yes, the calories and serving content are on the website right now under each recipe. So again, if you look on the website and you look under the recipe section, you can see exactly what we’ve done to cut out some of the fat and to cut out some of the calories.”

### What About Social Media, Y’all?

**JM:** “What are you planning to do besides having these recipes on the site? Does Deen have her own Twitter account and will she be tweeting about her recipes or about her treatment, or making Victoza-branded tweets? Anything like that being planned?”

**AM:** “She does have her own Twitter account as well as a Facebook page. Unlike Charlie Kimball—who is a Novo Nordisk spokesperson for another diabetes treatment and who does all the tweeting by himself—Paula has a team of people helping her put out information and paying attention to her Facebook page.

“Charlie and Paula are from different generations. Not that Paula isn’t pretty internet-savvy, but living off of her cellphone and tweeting are not a part of her daily life. So we are working with her group on elements that she’s already got established to try to integrate some of the *Diabetes in a New Light* campaign elements wherever they’re appropriate.

“I don’t think Paula is going to post any Victoza-branded tweets, but you might see stuff that says Diabetes in a New Light or something like that.”

**Side Note:** Paula Deen’s Twitter account is @Paula\_Deen. She has over 650,000 followers compared to Charlie Kimball’s 4,678 (@charliekimball).

Here are some recent tweets from Deen relevant to her role as a paid diabetes spokesperson:

“Y’all can visit <http://www.DiabetesinaNewLight.com> to learn more about my journey with type 2 diabetes! #DiabetesinaNewLight – 17 Jan

“Great speaking with TODAY about my journey with type 2 diabetes #DiabetesinaNewLight.” – 17 Jan

#DiabetesinaNewLight is the hash tag to follow in order to learn more about her sponsorship.

Deen’s Facebook page has over 1,600,000 “Likes.” On her wall are many posts praising her such as “Ms Paula...I adore you so much and want you to know that I am in your corner in regards to your diagnosis” and “Paula you are a wonderful lady. We need more like you in the world. I hope you do well controlling your diabetes and don’t pay attention to the media, you have

always said moderation which is so true. Nothing wrong with liking good wholesome food in moderation. If people have no control that is their problem not yours. Kepp up the great entertaining ideas and good food full of love....”

There are also some negative comments, including “Since you now have something to bring to the table, can you explain to us the BLACK BOX WARNING on your Novo Nordisk pill and why are they not permitted to be a first line protocol? Thx.”

### The Celebrity Is the Message

**JM:** “But now that she’s a paid spokesperson, do you have to look more closely at what she will be saying on talk shows? Can you tell us a little bit how you intend to keep her in line with the message?”

**AM:** “Just like with anybody, we talk a lot about messages. We also develop messages for each individual. It’s no ‘one size fits all.’ It’s one of the things that we had to think about a lot before we started to work with Paula.

“It’s Paula Deen, She’s not going to lie.

“We can say, hey, Paula, these are the things that we think would be good for you to say. And she’ll say, ‘but let’s put this in my voice’ or ‘that didn’t right sound right to me.’ I think that’s what makes this program true -- because it is her. It is real. That is the truth.

“So we don’t mind the fact that she said Bobby has a show called ‘Not My Mama’s Meals’ because again that’s how it all fits together. We don’t view that as competition to our program. We view that as another venue where people with diabetes or people who just want to eat healthier can go and find information for food that is good, that is comforting to you but that doesn’t have as many calories. We were thrilled because it’s so in line with what we want this campaign to be.”

### Deen Now Emphasizes Eating in Moderation

**JM:** “Before this interview we talked a little bit about her comment on the *Today Show* that she has always told her fans to eat in moderation and then I tweeted that I didn’t believe it. Has she said that before?”

**AM:** “Absolutely. When we started talking to her I actually saw the interview on *The View* where I think she and Barbara Walters definitely had some words. I think she had written a cookbook at the time about easy lunches for parents to make their kids or that kids can make for themselves or they can make together. And Barbara at the time accused her of contributing to the prevalence of childhood obesity.”

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**JM:** "I think she was saying kids should eat cheesecake for breakfast or something like that."

**AM:** "Yes, I think that's what Barbara Walters accused her of. And her immediate response was, 'Barbara, you can't eat this every day. I've always said you should do this in moderation.' We found several instances of that. Even on her show where she would cook something really, really decadent, she would say this comes with the disclaimer of one serving per lifetime. And she joked about it but, again, she's always said it."

**JM:** "There's a video on YouTube where Paula Deen is really stuffing her face with this cheeseburger and glazed donut sandwich." [See Figure 2, page 5.]

**AM:** "The Krispy Kreme one, right? I heard it was like the best thing ever but I've never tasted it."

**JM:** "Well, yes, it might be. But she didn't look like she was eating in moderation. But there are things like that out there that are going to contradict the 'in moderation' message that she's now using and that is probably very important in terms of people with diabetes, and to Novo Nordisk. How can these opposing images work together in the future where people are seeing all these stuff on YouTube and then trying to follow the recipes on *Diabetes in a New Light* and eat in moderation?"

**AM:** "She trades her show for six weeks out of the year. It's a 30-minute show. And it's syndicated and gets re-aired all of over the country, all over the world. What a lot of people have been telling us is that when they want a good meal, when they want to do something that's a treat, they know they can look to Paula Deen to give them a recipe that is divine. And we want people to know that you can still have that. If you want to have a birthday cake, have birthday cake. Just don't eat birthday cake seven days out the week. And that's an honest point."

"As a diabetes company, we encourage people to make changes in their diet. Exercise and have a good healthy life. But we also recognize that when you get a diabetes diagnosis, you can't just flip the switch and then all of a sudden you'll never going to do those things that you love. And one of the things that people love to do is eat."

"So what Paula's saying is, can we have it both ways? I think the answer is absolutely yes. She can say, 'look, y'all. If you want a Sunday meal, this is how you need to do it and this is how it's done and nobody is going to do it better. But let me show you this, this is how you can do it to cut back on the calories. This is what I'm told can help you cut back on some of the fat. I can show you how to do it both ways.'

"And I can tell you this. Paula Deen didn't make me stop at McDonald's the other day, but I did. It's a choice that people have to make on whether or not they can do the

easy things that they know and eat the things that they love but not eat them every day. And then also have alternatives to make good food that's also good for you."

### Show Us the Money!

**JM:** "Okay. Fair enough. I have one last item on my agenda to talk with you about and it has to do with the compensation for celebrity spokespeople in general. I know that obviously Paula Deen is being paid, but she doesn't want to talk about money because it's 'garish' according to her. But for me, talking about how much money is spent in the different areas of pharmaceutical marketing is a valid topic. I'd like to get a better idea how much money the drug industry spends on celebrity spokespeople."

"I always asked the money question because the industry is criticized for spending so much money on celebrities and it takes away from other things that the money can be spent on. Can you speak about that issue?"

**AM:** "We don't discuss compensation. If Paula was a regular, everyday employee, I couldn't tell you how much she is making. I can't tell you how much I'm making nor would I ask you how you're making. So I think that's number one."

"But number two, when you talk about the pharmaceutical industry and it's spend on celebrities, it's interesting because you wouldn't see celebrities working on campaigns if it wasn't a good investment from a marketing point of view."

"Before any celebrity is engaged, we do a thorough analysis of who the person is, what the person does for a living, and how would that person fit with the company, with the corporate culture and with the brand."

**Side Note:** "Talking about money is garish," said Deen. "It's tacky. But, of course, I'm been compensated for my time. That's the way our world works."

Only people with lots of money can say that talking about money is garish" and "tacky!" Perhaps it's time that Senator Grassley investigate the money that pharmaceutical companies pay celebrities such as Paula Deen and push to have these payments made public just like pharma payments to physicians must be made public starting in 2013 (see page 8).

**JM:** "So it sounds like you're doing some kind of return on investment (ROI) analysis. Is that true?"

**AM:** "Absolutely. As with any marketing initiative you analyze the ROI. I have to justify why I want to do anything from a corporate standpoint. So this is no different than anything else that we would do from a marketing perspective."

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“I think that the one thing that is different is we are working with someone who already has celebrity status and already has recognition outside of working with us. So it’s a different situation than we are used to but I think it’s one that we knew we were getting into. We’re really glad to have gotten into it and we’re looking forward to the future.”

**Side Note:** According to a January 22, 2012 article in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (“Paula Deen learns a hard lesson”; <http://bit.ly/xec6yI>), Deen “clearly taken some of her critics’ words to heart. On Wednesday, she announced that she and her sons will donate part of their compensation from Novo Nordisk to the American Diabetes Association, and an ADA spokesperson confirmed that the Deens will be appearing without pay at upcoming events.

“Those changes may seem small, and they’re hardly the mea culpa that many people crave, but they’re also realistic enough to maintain. The butter queen may not be our ideal celebrity diabetes representative. She’s not going to go on a vegan diet, throw out her deep-fryer or train for a marathon. And it’s really no surprise that she endorsed a diabetes drug -- after all, this is a woman who has already endorsed everything from wooden spoons to mattresses to Smithfield hams.

“But for someone with as loud a voice and as big a platform as Ms. Deen, even small changes could have a positive effect on her millions of fans.

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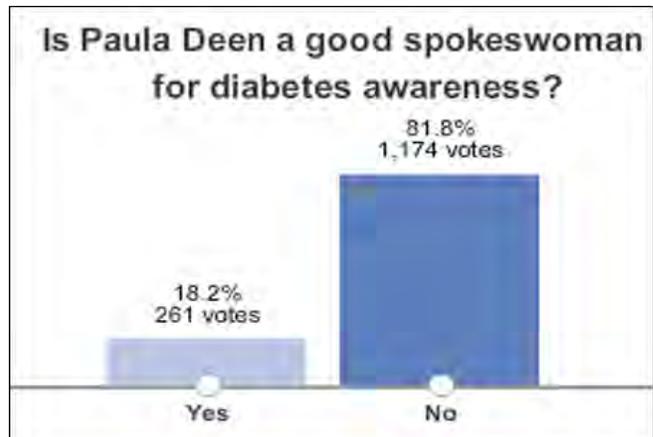
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