

## DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE 59TH MEDICAL WING (AETC) JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO - LACKLAND TEXAS



25 APR 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR SGME

ATTN: JANA WARDIAN

FROM: 59 MDW/SGVU

SUBJECT: Professional Presentation Approval

- Your paper, entitled <u>Diabetes Cannot be Controlled, But it Can Be Managed</u> presented at/published to <u>Journal of Clinical Diabetes</u> in accordance with MDWI 41-108, has been approved and assigned local file #<u>17212.</u>
- 2. Pertinent biographic information (name of author(s), title, etc.) has been entered into our computer file. Please advise us (by phone or mail) that your presentation was given. At that time, we will need the date (month, day and year) along with the location of your presentation. It is important to update this information so that we can provide quality support for you, your department, and the Medical Center commander. This information is used to document the scholarly activities of our professional staff and students, which is an essential component of Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center (WHASC) internship and residency programs.
- 3. Please know that if you are a Graduate Health Sciences Education student and your department has told you they cannot fund your publication, the 59th Clinical Research Division may pay for your basic journal publishing charges (to include costs for tables and black and white photos). We cannot pay for reprints. If you are a 59 MDW staff member, we can forward your request for funds to the designated Wing POC at the Chief Scientist's Office, Ms. Alice Houy, office phone: 210-292-8029; email address: alice.houy.civ@mail.mil.
- 4. Congratulations, and thank you for your efforts and time. Your contributions are vital to the medical mission. We look forward to assisting you in your future publication/presentation efforts.

LINDA STEEL-GOODWIN, Col, USAF, BSC Director, Clinical Investigations & Research Support

## PROCESSING OF PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL RESEARCH/TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

#### INSTRUCTIONS

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For presentations before professional societies and like organizations, the 59 MDW Public Affairs Office (PAO) will provide the needed review to ensure proper disclaimers are included and the subject matter of the presentation does not create any cause for DoD concern.

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NOTE: All abstracts, papers, posters, etc., should contain the following disclaimer statement:

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Diabetes cannot be Controlled, but it can be Managed

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## **DIABETES MANAGEMENT**

As a diabetes social science researcher and person with Type 1 diabetes for more than 24 years, I cringe when my healthcare provider suggests I need to "control" my diabetes. I know exactly what he or she is saying; however, I have come to accept that control is beyond my capability. Merriam Webster Dictionary defines control as, "to direct the behavior of something to do what you want; to have power over." If only I had this super power! On the other hand, the definition of management is, "to handle or direct with a degree of skill" and "to take care of and make decisions about." This is something I can do!

Let me illustrate the difference. If you have children, you may believe you are controlling your child when the child does what you are asking her to do. However, you only have the illusion of control. The child maintains control over her actions; she just decided to cooperate and do what you wanted her to do. Diabetes is very much like this child. You may believe you have control because your glucose was in a healthy range at a given time. Diabetes may have cooperated, but it was not controlled.

My earliest recollection of balking at the notion of control is about 24 years ago when I was ordered to avoid sugar at all costs with the associated promise that my glucose would be fine. Please keep in mind that this was before we understood insulin to carbohydrate ratios. I refused to eat anything that contained sugar. I obediently maintained the regimen of two injections of NPH insulin and mealtime Regular insulin of 5 units three times a day. To my dismay, my blood sugar would inexplicably soar after some meals and plummet after others. How could this be? I was doing what I was told. My doctor gave me the look that told me he was certain I was "cheating". I knew better. This was when I knew I could not control diabetes.

Today we know that diabetes is a multifaceted disease with numerous factors interfering with consistent blood glucose management (ADA, 2017). These factors include diet, physical activity, medication, stress, illness, hormonal changes, dehydration, and pain (ADA, 2017). Polonsky et al. (2005) resonates with me as he characterizes diabetes management as a "complex, demanding, and often confusing set of self-care directives" (p. 626). Furthermore, current notions of diabetes management place a heavy burden on people to maintain healthy blood sugar. This expectation of controlling blood sugar has contributed to an atmosphere laden with stigmatization of people with diabetes (Broom & Whittaker, 2004). On occasion, loved ones or complete strangers have winced when I check my blood sugar and questioned my dietary choices with a prying, "Can you eat that?"

People with diabetes have two primary self-management strategies: proactive and reactive. The proactive approach requires the person with diabetes attempt to prevent extreme blood sugars. For example, lowering your pump basal rate while exercising could prevent hypoglycemia or carbohydrate counting instead of fixed dosing for meals may allow blood sugar to be maintained in a healthy range. The reactive approach requires retrospective problemsolving. If the blood sugar is currently high, taking correctional insulin will assist in lowering the blood sugar. Conversely, if blood sugar is falling, drinking juice can be used to treat a hypoglycemic event.

My husband describes diabetes as the math problem that never ends. I count my carbs, calculate insulin using my insulin to carbohydrate ratio, and add in any correction insulin needed and take the dose. In reality, after many years of calculations, this is still just my best estimate. Even dietitians cannot always calculate carbohydrates accurately, so what hope do I have? It is unreasonable to expect control over something if we do not know all of the factors influencing a given phenomenon. Thus, the notion of controlling diabetes places an impossible burden on both the patient and the healthcare provider.

## **DIABETES MANAGEMENT**

It is important that patients have an accurate expectation of diabetes self-management in order to achieve optimal outcomes. Furthermore, illness representations predict self-management behaviors, lending support for constructing an accurate representation of diabetes and the ability to manage it (Abubakari et al., 2015). In addition, Richardson et al. (2007) found that diabetes-related perceptions were related to HbA1c. Toward this end, the power of words cannot be denied. In the patient-physician relationship, words must be thoughtfully chosen to convey intended meaning. Rowe et al. (2014) suggest patients and providers likely have differing expectations in the clinical encounter shaped by personal beliefs, fears, and attitudes.

Patients carry the healthcare provider's words and perceived expectations from the exam room to their home where the treatment plan is implemented. Indeed, even when patients with diabetes have applied self-management strategies, diabetes has a mind of its own and will not be controlled; there is the very real possibility that blood sugar will unexpectedly rise or fall. There are factors beyond the patient's control and awareness, such as counter-regulatory hormones and insulin sensitivity, which may vary throughout the day.

I submit that terminology used in healthcare settings has evolved over time, reflecting current beliefs and attitudes of providers regarding patient care. For example, Tilson (2004) suggested replacing the term "compliance" with "adherence" to better reflect the desire to promote shared decision-making between the healthcare provider and patient. Thus, I propose a similar shift from discussions of "controlling" to "managing" diabetes as being a more appropriate term to realistically reflect the current understanding of diabetes treatment.

## Disclaimer:

The views expressed are those of the author(s)/presenter(s) and do not reflect the official views or policy of the Department of Defense or its Components.

# **DIABETES MANAGEMENT**

# Acknowledgements

Dr. Jana Wardian is the sole author of this work and takes full responsibility for the content. The views expressed are those of the author and do not represent those of the Department of Defense or its components.

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