

COFFEE BREAK - NEWS FLASH

'CHILDREN WITH DIABETES – WHATS THE BIG DEAL?'



95% of children and young people have type 1 diabetes, that is not caused by obesity or lifestyle choices and is not preventable or curable. It is a life-long condition where the body no longer produces insulin, a life-sustaining hormone that requires daily replacement by injection and careful management of daily activities, such as food, exercise, and school.

Hospital-based Paediatric Diabetes Teams therefore provide extensive structured education, and support to these children and their families from diagnosis until transition to adult care between the ages of 17-19 years. This includes three monthly multi-disciplinary clinics, nurse and diet clinics and education sessions, community visits, 24/7 telephone advice, psychology input, and stakeholder education/support for schools/nurseries/other carers.

Despite this level of on-going support, the daily, constant and relentless demands of their diagnosis can lead to treatment mis-management, and/or patients and families neglecting their child's health needs due to the burden of other personal and social circumstances. In these instances, their diabetes teams will step up the level of support and engagement, providing tailored interventions with 'working plans' to help them get back on track.

This often has a positive impact. However, there are occasions when family life and other circumstances, or the breakdown of relationships, result in the patient and their families being incapable of fulfilling, and engaging, in the level of diabetes management required to maintain their child's personal safety. This will lead to severe acute complications which results in significant harm requiring hospital admission for intensive medical intervention.

Did you know that these acute complications can lead to death?

Whilst we are aware that a very small proportion of cases reach child safeguarding practice reviews [1], since 2013 (12 years) there were 7 reviews citing medical neglect in diabetes. These included 5 avoidable deaths in children and young people due to the mis-management of diabetes treatment and/or lack of engagement with local diabetes teams. Multiple published reviews published between 2009-2019 citing unexpected deaths due to medical neglect, suggested that in 20/26 cases (>75%), different parental actions may have changed the outcome for the child [1].

When families have these personal and social challenges, the Paediatric Diabetes Teams need YOU, Social Care, to help us by supporting individuals and families to ease the pressures of everyday life. This refocuses them on the health needs of their child/young person and provides them with some 'head space' to work with us to get back on track with their diabetes management.

Working in this collaborative manner will combine significant resources to ensure the reduction in risk to the child or young person's health and well-being and enhance the capabilities of the family to live within their circumstances whilst managing the required health needs.

Thank you for your curiosity in this 'coffee break news flash' and hope you enjoyed your break!

1. <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/11/8/e048689.full.pdf>