Self-management of diabetes

A CPD article updated Linda Miller’s knowledge of improving self-management of type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

What was the nature of the CPD activity, practice-related feedback and/or event and/or experience in your practice?

The article provided an insight into some of the challenges associated with self-management of diabetes, and discussed strategies that can be used to improve patient outcomes.

What did you learn from the CPD activity, feedback and/or event and/or experience in your practice?

The article stated that people with type 1 and type 2 diabetes are usually expected to manage their own condition, and it discussed ways healthcare professionals can advise and support these patients.

I learned that healthcare professionals should recognise self-management of diabetes can be complex, and it is important to work collaboratively with patients. The article emphasised that patients’ individual choices should be listened to and respected.

Management of diabetes generally includes the need to monitor blood glucose levels, food intake, medication and physical activity. I have learned that healthcare professionals should be aware that a lack of understanding of the condition, complex treatment regimens, stress and anxiety can complicate the management of diabetes. Effective communication is essential to encourage effective self-care.

How did you change or improve your practice?

I plan to ensure patients with diabetes understand their blood glucose readings, so that adjustments can be made to their treatment.

I will provide patients with information about how to avoid hypoglycaemia, because if left untreated, it can result in delirium, coma and death. I plan to inform patients of the importance of regular blood glucose monitoring, setting realistic blood targets, and carrying medical identification in case of emergency.

Sufficient information about diabetes and its management should be given to the patient. I will ensure I work closely with patients to help them understand their regimen, and document the nursing care provided to maintain continuity of care. ‘Information overload’ can be a problem for some patients, so I will check their understanding of information and ask if they have any questions.

Write your own reflective account

You can gain a certificate of learning by reading a Nursing Standard CPD article and writing a reflective account. Turn to page 53 for this week’s article. To write a reflective account for Nursing Standard, use the NMC reflective accounts form available here: revalidation.nmc.org.uk/download-resources/forms-and-templates

Complete the four questions about the CPD article you have just read, writing about 800 words in total. Details of how to submit your reflective account are available at: journals.rcni.com/r/reflective-account
I am aware some patients might require additional support and alternative educational approaches, and will refer them to specialist services, such as the dietitian, if appropriate.

The article raised my awareness of demotivating language, for example ‘poor’ glycaemic control or labelling someone as ‘non-compliant’. Rather than attaching blame, a non-judgemental and supportive approach should be used. Patients should be encouraged to gain control of their condition and become actively involved in decisions.

**How is this relevant to the Code?**

*Select one or more themes: Prioritise people, Practise effectively, Preserve safety, Promote professionalism and trust*

One of the themes of The Code is to prioritise people, which involves recognising and respecting the contribution people can make to their health and wellbeing. This article discussed how to involve patients in their care and support them in managing their diabetes. It emphasised the importance of using a holistic approach during the assessment and treatment.

Another theme of The Code is to practise effectively. The article discussed the importance of health-literacy skills and the use of appropriate language, which relates to the standard that nurses must ‘communicate clearly’.

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**PATIENT VIEW**

**The perfect blend of compassion, knowledge and practical ability**

Macmillan breast cancer nurse Caroline Mercer has supported *Sally Macklin* through every aspect of her journey since diagnosis.

Macmillan breast cancer nurse Caroline Mercer has been at my side since I was diagnosed with cancer in March 2014.

I was at breaking point when she visited me in Royal Lancaster Infirmary between Christmas and New Year that year after my total mastectomy, immediate reconstruction and chemotherapy.

Caroline reassured me and arranged psychotherapy, as well as referring me for massage and a silicon nipple. She also dressed my wounds, explained about how to shower and rang every day to check my progress.

**Honest and supportive**

If I get hysterical about germs and infections, Caroline will drop everything and offer reassurance. She is honest, supportive and open to feedback, which she views positively as a chance to improve her practice.

Caroline fitted a prosthesis for me so I could feel less conscious of my mismatched breasts, and when I was having chemotherapy she was encouraging about the cold cap. As a result I managed to endure it so I did not lose my hair.

She advised me about supportive bras, exercise and resuming sex. Caroline also organised appointments for me to see a specialist after identifying side effects from my drugs; she got my treatment changed as a result. She spoke up for me when another doctor was not performing satisfactorily.

Survivor services can be scattered about, so Caroline puts together individually tailored survivor packages. She even helped me set up a Cancer Choir and secured a donation from the consultant for the karaoke machine.

She has helped me celebrate the ‘new me’ – my three-and-a-half stone weight loss, training plan, healthy eating and alcohol-free regime, and my retirement. Caroline filled in my benefit claim forms and wrote a letter for occupational health services.

**Generous nature**

With a perfect blend of compassion, knowledge and practical ability, she is generous of her time and totally patient-centred – a diamond among pearls. I have seen her calm authority when arranging referrals and she will not take no for an answer if it compromises her patients’ welfare. I have always felt that I am her only patient. Caroline improves the lives of scared people and helps them to be brave again.

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*Linda Miller is a staff nurse at St Mary’s Hospital, Newport, Isle of Wight*