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Initiating Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support Referrals at Critical Time 3—When Complicating Factors Develop

A Guide for Communicating with Patients and Implementing Team Care

During routine medical care, health care professionals (HCPs) may identify factors that influence diabetes treatment and the associated self-management plan. These factors may include patients' limited ability to manage and cope with diabetes complications, other health conditions, medications, physical limitations, emotional needs and basic living requirements. The identification of diabetes complications or other patient factors that may influence self-management should be considered a critical indicator of the need for diabetes education that requires immediate attention and adequate resources.

HCPs should initiate referrals to and facilitate participation in DSMES services at the four critical times:

- 1) At diagnosis
- 2) Annually and/or when not meeting treatment targets
- 3) When complicating factors develop
- 4) When transitions in life and care occur

This job aid focuses on *Critical Time 3—When Complicating Factors Develop* and provides strategies for communicating with patients and implementing a team care approach during this critical time.

Communicating with Patients

Key Factors to Consider for Patient Discussions



Mental Health

Diabetes distress refers to negative psychological reactions specifically related to the burden of managing diabetes. While it shares some features with depression, diabetes distress has a greater impact on behavioral and metabolic outcomes. It is responsive to intervention, including DSMES-focused interventions and family support. However, additional mental health resources are generally required to address severe diabetes distress, clinical depression and anxiety. It is important to recognize the psychological issues related to diabetes and prescribe treatment as appropriate.



Basic Needs

Social factors, including difficulty paying for food, medications, diabetes management supplies, medical care, housing or utilities negatively affect metabolic control and increase resource use. When basic living needs are not met, diabetes self-management becomes increasingly difficult. Certified diabetes care and education specialists (CDCESs) can address such issues, provide information about available resources and collaborate with patients to create a self-management plan that reflects these challenges. If complicating factors are present during initial or maintenance DSMES sessions, CDCESs can either directly address these factors or arrange for additional resources.



Managing Limitations

Diabetes-related health conditions can cause physical limitations, such as visual impairment, dexterity issues and physical activity restrictions. CDCESs can help patients manage limitations through education and various support resources. For example, educators can help patients access large-print or talking glucose meters that can help those with visual impairments and specialized insulin-delivery aids that can help those with visual and/or dexterity limitations.

Implementing a Team Care Approach

Topics and Strategies

The diagnosis of additional health conditions and the potential need for additional medications can complicate diabetes self-management for patients. DSMES services can address the integration of multiple medical conditions into overall care with a focus on maintaining or appropriately adjusting medications, eating plans and physical activity levels to maximize health outcomes and quality of life.

Action Steps

Here are DSMES-related action steps for HCPs and CDCESs during this critical time:

Primary Care Provider/Endocrinologist/ Clinical Care Team	CDCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Identify any factors that hinder or facilitate achievement of treatment targets and goals.<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss the impact of complications and recognize patients' successes with treatment and self-management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Provide self-management skills training to help delay progression of the disease and prevent new complications.<input type="checkbox"/> Provide or refer for emotional support for diabetes distress and depression.<input type="checkbox"/> Develop and support individualized strategies for behavioral change and healthy coping.<input type="checkbox"/> Develop individualized strategies to accommodate any sensory or physical limitations, adapt to new self-management demands and promote behavior change and overall health.

Remember: Complicating factors may arise at any time. Health care professionals should be prepared to promptly refer patients who develop complications or other issues for DSMES services.

Reference

Powers MA, Bardsley JK, Cypress M, et al. [Diabetes self-management education and support in adults with type 2 diabetes: a consensus report of the American Diabetes Association, the Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of PAs, the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and the American Pharmacists Association.](#) *Diabetes Care* 2020;43:1636–1649