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Experiences of Diabetes Self-Management and Access to Services during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Background and aims:

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the provision of diabetes care in the UK with many routine clinic visits replaced with video or telephone appointments. Using an online survey we aimed to investigate the effect that the pandemic had on diabetes self-management as well as the increased provision of telehealth.

Methods:

An anonymous questionnaire was distributed in collaboration with Diabetes UK local groups in the Scottish Highlands and in Northern Ireland via their email lists.

We conducted a thematic analysis of responses combined with descriptive analysis.

Results:

For many of the respondents' diet and daily exercise deteriorated during the pandemic due to greater food intake and less outdoor activity. Conversely for some individuals' diet improved, and exercise increased, due to more time and freedom associated with working from home. We also found that despite greater convenience, participants thought telehealth was often a poor substitute for face-to-face appointments. Routine screening and health monitoring was delayed or cancelled by health practitioners and contact with healthcare professionals was also delayed by respondents.

Conclusions:

Greater access to telehealth services does not appear to compensate for negative effect on complication prevention and self-management associated with Covid-19. Going forward, less reliance on telehealth and a more blended targeted approach is required to ensure delay and escalation of diabetes complications does not have significant adverse effects on individual health and healthcare services, effects which decrease quality of life.

Recent Publications

Van Woerden H, Bucholz M, Clubbs Coldron B, Coates V, Heaton J, McCann M, Perrin N, Waterson R, Watson A, MacRury S. Factors influencing hospital conveyance following ambulance attendance for people with diabetes: A retrospective observational study. *Diabet*

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Roberts, J., Pritchard, A. L., Treweek, A. T., Rossi, A. G., Brace, N., Cahill, P., Macrury, S. M., Wei, J. & Megson, I. L., Why Is COVID-19 More Severe in Patients With Diabetes? The Role of Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme 2, Endothelial Dysfunction and the Immunoinflammatory System 3 Feb 2021, In: *Frontiers in Cardiovascular Medicine*. 7

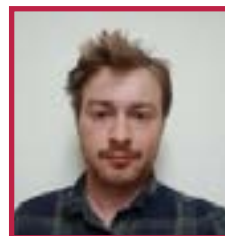
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Watson, A., Coates, V., McConnell, D., Clarke, C., Ruddell, N., Masterson, S., Clubbs Coldron, B. & Wingfield, B., 14 Jul 2021, Exploring variation in ambulance calls and conveyance rates for adults with diabetes who contact the ambulance service: a retrospective database analysis (Accepted/In press) In: *British Paramedic Journal*.

Biography

Benjamin Clubbs Coldron is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Highlands and Islands working on the Centre for Personalised Medicine Diabetes Project alongside Sandra MacRury and Vivien Coates. The project seeks to develop interventions and policy that has the potential to reduce unscheduled admissions for people with diabetes by 10% across Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Professor Sandra MacRury is Professor of Clinical Diabetes, Head of Rural Health and Wellbeing, Division of Rural Health and has many years of both practical and academic experience working with people with diabetes. Professor Vivien Coates is Professor, Faculty Of Life & Health Sciences.

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