

Short Communication

Diabetes: Seeing the Whole Person

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined health as: "The state of complete mental, physical, and social well-being not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" [1]. Diabetes is a FULL-TIME job that People with Diabetes (PWD) do not get paid for and spend a lot of time and money to manage! However, in study after study, patients with diabetes express a desire to be "perceived as persons, not illnesses" and suggest providers who focus exclusively on medical problem-solving often leave them feeling reduced to their disease" [2] For example, being called a "diabetic" is reducing a person with diabetes to their disease. So now is the time to start looking at the whole person.

For years, the focus of diabetes management has been on the medical management, missing the key pieces of a person's life. Wellness is defined as "an approach to health that focuses on balancing the many aspects or dimensions, of a person's life through increasing the adoptions of health enhancing conditions and behaviors rather than attempting to minimize conditions of illness". To follow are three ways you can include wellness in the diabetes management of your patients.

1. A key secret to being successful with diabetes is to first and foremost help the person with diabetes live a normal life! As a provider, learn what gives the person with diabetes energy to stay motivated on a regular basis. Is it surrounding themselves with people who are supportive? Stepping out of their comfort zone? Doing something that scares them? Stop looking at your patients with diabetes as numbers and start looking at them as people.

2. Another important approach to recognizing the person, and not the disease, is that blood glucose numbers are neutral information, not good or bad. They are just information to help the patient make the next best choice. With all of the ads and social media attention, changing that mindset can be hard for the provider but a large part of it starts with the education provided to the patient at diagnosis.

3. Include a health educator in your practice. Health education is a key to helping patients understand the medical terminology because health educators can bring the information to a level that the patient can begin applying. If you are not familiar with the health education degree and what a Master Certified Health Education Specialist is (these people can also be dually certified as Certified Diabetes Educators—it is the longest route to certification but it gives the whole person view point) then visit the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing.

So, make today the day you start help your patients living well with diabetes stay active and happy! Learn more about them and stop reducing them to their disease.

References

1. Cottrell R (2002) Principles & Foundations of Health Promotion and Education Second Edition. Pg. 7
2. Légaré F, Witteman HO (2013) Shared decision making: examining key elements and barriers to adoption into routine clinical practice. *Health Aff (Millwood)* 32: 276-284. [\[crossref\]](#)

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