

AN ONLINE GUIDED SELF-DETERMINATION PROGRAM TO IMPROVE SELF-MANAGEMENT IN YOUNG ADULTS WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

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Background: For young adults with type 1 diabetes (YAWD), it can be difficult to manage diabetes due to competing lifestyles and work or study-related commitments. The Guided Self-determination (GSD) method is an evidence-based self-management program based on Self-Determination Theory. It aims to improve autonomous motivation to make positive lifestyle changes, perceived competence in diabetes and communication with healthcare providers. An online version has been developed in Australia, in which YAWD and diabetes educators participate in online conversations based on structured reflection sheets.

Aim: The aim was to evaluate the feasibility and efficacy of the online GSD program in improving diabetes self-management skills among YAWD.

Method: Nine Diabetes Educators (DEs) attended a 1.5 day face-to-face training course. YAWD aged 18 to 30 were recruited from a Young Adults Diabetes Service at a large metropolitan health service, from Consumer organisation Diabetes Victoria and University student forums. DEs completed the online GSD program flexibly with YAWD over 3 to 6 months. Online surveys were completed by YAWD before and after participation. These surveys included validated measures of (a) autonomous motivation to change health behaviours; (b) perceived competence in diabetes and (c) communication with healthcare providers. The follow-up survey invited comments on YAWD's experience of the program.

Result: 15 young adults have completed the program. Survey scores indicate improved autonomous motivation, higher competence in diabetes and improved communication with healthcare providers. Perceived benefits of the online program included the flexibility of scheduling "conversations" and getting to know more about themselves and their health.

Conclusion: The online GSD program is feasible; efficacy in improving self-management skills has yet to be assessed in a larger sample of YAWD. However, the novel GSD online program has the potential to improve diabetes care by empowering YAWD and by facilitating access to healthcare regardless of location and outside of traditional office hours.