

Prof Ingrid Willaing

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Ingrid Willaing is Professor and Head of Diabetes Management Research at Steno Diabetes Center Copenhagen. Willaing's research covers patient and health provider perspectives on psychosocial support and health promotion in relation to chronic illness. Her portfolio includes health services research i.e., health technology assessments and studies of health care practice. Patient attitudes, needs and wishes are at the core of her research. Willaing's participatory research activity now focuses on development of novel research-based, innovative diabetes support interventions directed at people with diabetes and their families. Research employs involvement of target groups and typically consist of interventions including training of health care providers.

ABSTRACT

Diabetes is a biomedical disease and a behavioural and emotional challenge. The cognitive and emotional demands of everyday diabetes management mean that people with diabetes have a substantial burden imposed upon their mental health. They commonly experience some degree of dysphoria, with diabetes distress independently and strongly associated with poorer diabetes self-management behaviours and impaired glycaemic outcomes.

There is extensive literature on diabetes distress and diabetes-related psychosocial health. However, the exact nature of the association between psychosocial problems and biomedical diabetes outcomes is less established. The link between the biomedical and the psychosocial within diabetes care is crucial if we aspire to introduce systematic measurement and support for the specific challenges that people living with diabetes experience.

We need to investigate and determine the kind of skills that are necessary to provide psychosocial support and how to facilitate the use of those skills in practice. We need to know more about the who, when, and where of support provision and we also need to establish more knowledge about research-based interventions that are applicable in diabetes care in different settings and countries. To achieve this, we need to know more about people with diabetes, their attitudes, wishes, and needs, and the outcomes that ultimately matter to them.

This lecture is about the role of diabetes distress and its impact on overall quality of life and diabetes management behaviours. It covers the aspiration to introduce systematic measurement and support for the specific challenges that people living with diabetes experience daily.