

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVE OF INSULIN THERAPY IN TYPE 2 DIABETES VIA ONLINE UK DIABETES HEALTH FORUMS: A QUALITATIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THREADS.

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Background

Despite the advent of type two diabetes (T2D) remission strategies and novel therapeutic agents, many individuals with T2D will require insulin treatment to achieve target glycaemia and delaying diabetes complications. However, insulin refusal and cessation of treatment in this group is common and their needs are under reported and relatively unexplored.

Objectives

To explore the experiences and perspectives of individuals in this group, as expressed on online health forums. To inform the development of evidence-based structured educational and support strategies and health care provider awareness.

Methods

Retrospective archived forum threads from the two largest, freely and publicly accessible diabetes health forums in the UK (Diabetes UK and Diabetes.co.uk) were screened over a 12-month period (August 2019-20). Fifty-seven forum threads and posts were analysed via thematic analysis.

Results

Four overarching themes were generated to illustrate the unmet needs which had prompted members to seek information, advice and support regarding insulin therapy outside of their usual care provision, via the forums: empowerment through sharing self-management strategies; seeking and providing extended lifestyle advice; relationships with health care professionals (HCPs), and a source of psychological peer support.

Conclusion

This is the first study to collect data from online health forums, to characterise the experiences and perspectives of people with T2M for whom insulin therapy is indicated. Our findings suggest there are significant unmet practical self-management and psychological needs within this group that are not being met elsewhere, prompting the seeking of information and support online. The study results will help to directly inform insulin focused self-management and support strategies, in order to enable individuals in this group to achieve their best outcomes.

Keywords Type 2 diabetes, adults, qualitative, insulin, internet, online.