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ABSTRACT
Recent developments in automated insulin delivery through smart pump technology. Is there an artificial pancreas on the way?

The discovery of insulin was initially believed to herald the cure for type 1 diabetes, a disease caused by the complete absence of insulin and resulting in death shortly after onset. It was soon, however, realized that despite insulin replacement, devastating complications ensued a few years following diagnosis, due to chronic hyperglycaemia. Today, it is well established that optimal glycemic control is the cornerstone of type 1 diabetes management, increasing life expectancy and minimising complications.

Modern insulin replacement therapy in type 1 diabetes aims to achieve euglycaemia by attempting to mimic the physiological insulin secretion pattern. This can be accomplished either through multiple daily insulin injections or by using highly advanced devices called insulin pumps for continuous subcutaneous insulin delivery. Pump therapy is a complicated treatment scheme, demanding special education and skills. The recent emergence of glucose-responsive automated insulin pumps, which create a closed-loop system involving the pump, a continuous glucose sensor and a feedback-based dose-calculating algorithm, has revolutionized the management of type 1 diabetes. These pumps have succeeded in maintaining the time spent in the euglycemic range at over 70-75%, while minimising the occurrence of hypoglycaemia. Evolution of these so-called hybrid closed-loop systems from research to clinical practice has been considered as a major step towards the artificial pancreas, the holy grail of type 1 diabetes therapy. However, significant challenges to this approach still persist. These include achieving complete automation (current systems require patient intervention for meal dose calculation), reducing device size, enhancing subcutaneous catheters, and, most importantly, gaining access to portal circulation. These objectives are the focus of intense scientific research.