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Dr Rita Forde is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Nursing and Midwifery at University College Cork, Ireland and a visiting lecturer at the Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Palliative Care at King's College London. Rita was awarded a FEND Doctoral Fellowship and completed a PhD at King's College London exploring the experiences of pre-pregnancy care for women living with type 2 diabetes. She is currently collaborating on a number of studies related to diabetes and women's health.

ABSTRACT

Experiences of Women Living with Type 2 Diabetes Prior to and During Pregnancy: A Systematic Review

Background: Type 2 diabetes presents unique challenges for care prior to, during and after pregnancy. Women with type 2 diabetes have increased risks of maternal and fetal complications. Appropriate care prior to and during pregnancy reduces the risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes. Nevertheless, compared to those with type 1 diabetes, women with type 2 diabetes are less likely to be prepared for pregnancy. Our aim was to explore the experiences of women with type 2 diabetes prior to, during and after pregnancy.

Methods Six databases were systematically searched in September 2023. A meta-synthesis was conducted using a thematic synthesis approach to generate analytical themes from the data from women with type 2 diabetes.

Findings Eleven papers from seven countries met the inclusion criteria. The findings were organised thematically representing the individual and healthcare system level factors that underlie women's experiences including their lack of understanding of the need for pre-pregnancy care often underpins their decision making about pregnancy; and once pregnant they were fearful of not meeting clinical expectations to manage their diabetes and for the future health of their children.

They described a lack of integration of reproductive care into their routine diabetes care.

Conclusion Women with type 2 diabetes experience suboptimal exposure to appropriate care prior to pregnancy. This review illustrates the care deficits related to embedding reproductive healthcare into mainstream diabetes management for women with type 2 diabetes.