

SUPPORTING CHANGE IN A COMPLEX REALITY: SPECIALIST NURSES' EXPERIENCES OF COUNSELLING PATIENTS AT RISK OF TYPE 2 DIABETES

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Background

Specialist nurses in primary health care play a crucial role in helping individuals at risk of type 2 diabetes adopt healthier eating habits. Although the importance of dietary counseling for prevention is well recognized, little is known about how Specialist nurses experience providing tailored advice that takes into account gender, cultural background, and patients' daily circumstances.

Aim

To explore specialist nurses' experiences in delivering individualized dietary advice to patients at risk of type 2 diabetes, with attention to gender, culture, and contextual factors influencing.

Method

A qualitative design was used, based on semi-structured interviews with specialist nurses working in Swedish primary health care. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling, and data were collected between August and November 2025. Interviews were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, following Graneheim and Lundman.

Result

One overarching theme emerged: "A complex task to adapt to the various patients' life situations without additional education and encouragement." Four themes, with a total of 12 subthemes, showed how SNs used patient-centered strategies, considered gendered and multicultural influences, faced clinical and motivational challenges, and requested improved organizational and educational support. SNs highlighted empathy, small-step goal setting, and person-centered communication, but noted that limited time, patient demotivation, socioeconomic barriers, and cultural complexity hindered the effectiveness of counseling. They expressed a strong need for cultural competence training, accessible, up-to-date resources, and organizational backing for the prevention work.

Conclusion

Specialist nurses are dedicated to promoting healthy eating but face structural, cultural, and motivational barriers that limit the effectiveness of dietary prevention efforts. Diabetes prevention requires both personalized behavioral support and system-level changes. Strengthening organizational structures, improving access to culturally adapted materials, and adopting collaborative models can significantly enhance preventive care.