Evolution of Self-Care Research in Diabetes: Insights from the Italian Landscape

Abstract
Diabetes mellitus represents a global health emergency, affecting over 11% of the population and carrying a significant risk of long-term complications. Effective management relies heavily on self-care, a dynamic process involving self-care maintenance, self-care monitoring, and self-care management behaviors.

The evolution of self-care research in diabetes begins with the development and international validation of the Self-Care of Diabetes Inventory (SCODI). Further research has explored micro-level determinants, identifying self-care self-efficacy as a critical driver of behaviors. Qualitative insights further enrich this framework, revealing the complex lived experience of patients as they navigate the tension between daily routines, a sense of sacrifice, and the burden of constant control and occasional stigma.

Expanding to the social dimension (meso-level), dyadic research has identified distinct patterns of shared illness management between patients and caregivers. Findings demonstrate that both joint self-care and vigilant patient-led management significantly improve glycemic control, as evidenced by reductions in glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c). Longitudinal studies have also addressed the dynamic nature of self-care trajectories. Current and future directions focus on the refinement of assessment tools through an updated version of the SCODI and a strategic shift toward prevention. By targeting prediabetes through theory-driven digital interventions in the workplace, the goal is to intercept and support people at risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes, transitioning from chronic care management to the active promotion of long-term health and resilience.

Diletta Fabrizi, RN, PhD
Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Nursing
University of Milano-Bicocca | School of Medicine and Surgery
Via Cadore 48, Monza, 20900

Bio
Diletta Fabrizi, RN, PhD, is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Nursing at the University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy. Her research focuses on self-care in chronic conditions, specifically Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes and prediabetes. Her work explores the complexities of self-care, ranging from its determinants and relationship with clinical outcomes to its trajectories over time. Dr. Fabrizi coordinates several research projects centered on diabetes self-care. In addition to her research, she serves as an Adjunct Professor of Nursing Research for the Bachelor's in Nursing at the University of Milano- Bicocca. She has authored over 20 peer-reviewed publications and is actively involved in international collaborations aimed at improving clinical outcomes and health promotion, primarily in people with diabetes.