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Young people with diabetes and their peers

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Type 1 Diabetes (T1D) is amongst the most common form of chronic illness affecting young people in the UK. Self-management is crucial, but managing their T1D is often difficult for young people.

The social focus of young people shifts through adolescence from their family to their friends. Peer influences can have an impact across a range of adolescent behaviours.

Interventions to support self-management in young people with T1D could usefully include their friends and peers, but there has been little examination of how peers think about and respond to T1D. The aim of this work was to explore what peers know about the condition, and their attitudes and responses to it.

We used a qualitative approach, and conducted interviews with 10 adolescent T1D patients aged 13-15, along with a nominated close friend (n=20). We then carried out focus group sessions with participants without any necessary prior knowledge of T1D (n=15) in a secondary school setting. Full necessary ethical approvals were gained. We used Template Analysis, a flexible but structured form of thematic analysis which emphasises hierarchical coding, to analyse data.

References:

This work highlights the need for greater awareness of T1D in schools amongst teachers and peers, but encouragingly suggests that simple and easy to run educational sessions may be well-received. The evident lack of standardised school policies in relation to diabetes management is worrying, and should be improved to ensure there are no barriers to optimal self-management for young people with T1D.