

Embargoed until Thursday 16 July 2015

Psychological wellbeing a serious issue for teenagers with diabetes and families

A new report released today highlights the psychological, wellbeing and quality of life issues facing young Australians with type 1 diabetes and their parents. This is the first, large national Australian survey of its kind focused on how young people with diabetes (and their parents) feel about and manage the condition as they transition through childhood into adulthood

“The Diabetes MILES Youth report was funded by the National Diabetes Services Scheme” said Prof Greg Johnson, CEO of Diabetes Australia “and key findings were that one in four young people aged 13–19 years’ experience moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety and depression, and girls were more likely to report severe symptoms”.

“While two out of three young people report good quality of life, 18% felt they often have too much responsibility for their diabetes care. The most common issue for girls was ‘worrying about their weight’ whereas boys were most concerned about ‘friends and family not understanding how difficult living with diabetes can be,’” said Prof Johnson. “Around one in three young people with diabetes are known to need mental health support and 30–40% of young people with type 1 diabetes are “lost in transition” from paediatric to adult diabetes care”.

Director of the Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes, Professor Jane Speight says, “Living with diabetes places significant self-care and psychological demands on young people and their families. A third of parents reported impaired general emotional well-being and 8% of parents experienced severe anxiety symptoms. Almost half of the parents surveyed (48%) were frequently worried about their child experiencing hypoglycaemia.”

If left untreated, hypoglycaemia can lead to serious medical problems including loss of consciousness, convulsions or seizures requiring emergency treatment.

“One in 3 young people reported experiencing four or more hypoglycaemic episodes per week, and one third reported at least one episode of severe hypoglycaemia in the past 12 months. Approximately 1 in 4 young people often worried about having a hypoglycaemic event while asleep” said Prof Speight.

“Parents worried most frequently about the future and the possibility of their child developing complications.”

According to the Chair of the NDSS Young People with Diabetes Expert Reference Group Professor Susan Sawyer, “The challenge now is how to respond to the health

issues and psychological burden experienced by young people with diabetes and their families. We need to ensure that young people with diabetes are not viewed as a problem, but embraced. We also have a responsibility to engage young people in finding solutions that resonate with them.”

There are currently over 10,500 young people aged 10–19 years with diabetes in Australia and the majority of these (93%) have type 1 diabetes and were the focus of this Report.

The new research – the Diabetes MILES Youth report - was funded by the National Diabetes Services Scheme, and initiative of the Australian Government administered by Diabetes Australia. The study was conducted in collaboration with Australia Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes.

The sample of the national, online survey was 781 young people (aged 10 to 19 years) with type 1 diabetes and 826 parents, from all states and territories in Australia.

For more information:

Lyn Curtis

0411 019 924

lcurtis@diabetesvic.org.au

Sybille Taylor

0408 102 344

staylor@diabetesvic.org.au