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New resources to help health professionals identify and meet the psychological needs of people with diabetes

A new handbook discussed today at Australia's foremost diabetes conference will give health professionals the strategies and tools to better recognise and work with people with diabetes to reduce the significant psychological burden of diabetes.

Professor Jane Speight Foundation Director of the Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes (ACBRD) said there was extensive evidence highlighting the mental health impacts of living with diabetes.

"Our previous Diabetes MILES study showed that living with diabetes is challenging and has potentially serious emotional impacts for the person," Professor Speight said.

"For example, we found 1 in 4 people with type 1 diabetes and 1 in 5 people with type 2 diabetes experience severe diabetes distress.

"People with diabetes may also experience other emotional and mental health problems including fear of hypoglycaemia, and symptoms of depression and anxiety.

"This potentially affects a very large number of Australians with diabetes as there are currently an estimated 1.7 million Australians with diabetes".

The ACBRD, in collaboration with Diabetes Australia, has produced a new resource titled ***Diabetes and emotional health: A handbook for health professionals supporting adults with type 1 or type 2 diabetes.***

In conjunction with the handbook, eight factsheets have been developed and are available for people living with diabetes.

These leaflets focus on the same emotional problems covered in the handbook and provide opportunities for people with diabetes to realise they are not alone in feeling this way, and that there are many ways they can seek assistance to improve their emotional well-being.

Dr Christel Hendrieckx, clinical psychologist with the ACBRD, said recent international research found only half of diabetes health professionals provide psychological assessment and support to meet the psychological needs of people with diabetes.

"One of the fundamental reasons for this is that many health professionals do not feel they have the appropriate training to offer support to people with diabetes who are emotionally distressed, so this handbook is an important new resource for them," Dr Hendrieckx said.

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“While there are some resources available about general mental health problems, depression and anxiety for example, the importance of this new handbook is its focus on how living with diabetes specifically affects emotional and mental health, for example fear of hypoglycaemia, a diabetes-specific distress.”

Diabetes Australia CEO A/Professor Greg Johnson said the new resource was an important tool to promote more holistic diabetes healthcare.

“Diabetes distress, anxiety and depression represent a very serious health impact for people with diabetes but many health professionals have insufficient training or time to effectively address these serious issues with people with diabetes,” A/Professor Johnson said.

“This handbook will help create more opportunities for people with diabetes to talk about their emotional well-being with their health professional and, if problems are present, to identify and address them.

“Psychological health and physical health go hand in hand. If we don’t address psychological health more effectively we will not achieve holistic healthcare.”

Diabetes and emotional health: A handbook for health professionals supporting adults with type 1 or type 2 diabetes, and the related factsheets for people with diabetes have been developed by the ACBRD and Diabetes Australia with funding through the National Diabetes Services Scheme, an initiative of the Australian Government administered with the assistance of Diabetes Australia.

All the resources are free and can be accessed here:

Download **Diabetes and Emotional Health** handbook at www.ndss.com.au

Download the **factsheets** from the *Publications & Resources* section of the NDSS website: www.ndss.com.au

(NB: the factsheets are a part of the toolkit for health professionals, but are on the NDSS website so that are available to people with diabetes)

Note to editors:

- The National Diabetes Services Scheme is an initiative of the Australian Government, administered with the assistance of Diabetes Australia.
- This handbook and factsheets were developed as a part of the NDSS Mental Health and Diabetes National Development Programme. They were developed in collaboration with the Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes (ACBRD), a partnership for better health between Diabetes Victoria and Deakin University.
- The handbook has undergone evaluation, which involved interviews with health professionals (i.e. the target audience, e.g. diabetes educators, GPs, nurses, dietitians, endocrinologists) and people with diabetes, who read and commented

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on advanced copies of the book. Mental health care for people with diabetes is recognised as a priority area in the Australian National Diabetes Strategy 2016-2020, see report here:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/nds-2016-2020>.

- Diabetes is a serious, progressive and complex condition, which can result in serious complications.
- **The Diabetes MILES Study** (Management and Impact for Long-term Empowerment and Success) was a national survey of the psychosocial health and well-being of 3,338 Australian adults with type 1 or type 2 diabetes. The study was conducted in 2011 by the ACBRD, with funding from the NDSS. The report is available at: <https://static.diabetesaustralia.com.au/s/fileassets/diabetes-australia/4e052ae5-2d13-421e-b6f8-5e323b5c48a6.pdf>. For more information about Diabetes MILES, see: www.diabetesmiles.org.au.

The DAWN2™ Study is a global study of the unmet psychological needs of people with diabetes, their families and their health professionals. The health professional survey was completed by 4,785 health professionals (including 2066 primary care physicians, 1350 diabetes specialists, 827 nurses and 542 dietitians) across 17 countries. A minimum of 280 health professionals was recruited from each country. The study cited here is published in the September issue of *Diabetic Medicine*, available at:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/dme.13109/abstract>. For more information about DAWN2™, see: www.dawnstudy.com.

Diabetes Australia is the national body for people affected by all types of diabetes and those at risk. Diabetes Australia is committed to reducing the impact of diabetes. We work in partnership with diabetes health professionals, researchers and the community to minimise the impact of diabetes.