

January 2010

Living successfully with diabetes

Jim Ellis, a social worker with Children's Hospital for more than 18 years, most recently in the Diabetes Clinic, will retire this year. Here, he shares some words of wisdom with Diabetes Clinic patients and families.

Diabetes is difficult. With diabetes comes the challenges of learning about, creating and continuing a daily care routine that includes multiple blood sugar checks, attention to physical activity, close attention to the carbohydrates you eat and calculating and injecting insulin doses several times daily. Additionally, the child and family have to come to terms with the reality that diabetes is not going away.

Helping people discover and develop resources, make their own choices and empower them to act on their own behalf is central to the social work profession. As a social worker for the Diabetes Clinic, my work has included helping families meet daily challenges and adjust to the reality that diabetes will always be a part of their lives.

I also have had the opportunity to help families develop and access a variety of resources so they can safely and successfully meet the challenges of diabetes care. I have found that resources such as the American Diabetes Association and Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation can be very helpful. In addition, I've also helped families find financial resources such as prescription assistance, insurance, financial counseling and other services. A family's personal networks also are important, including extended family and friends. All of these resources can be a source of great comfort. Feeling isolated and alone with diabetes makes it even more difficult to manage.

Families often discover and build upon the strengths they already have at the time of the child's diagnosis. Each child, family member and family possesses qualities and characteristics that, when discovered, affirmed and nurtured, will help them manage the daily challenges of diabetes care. I think the best

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place to start is to believe in yourself. This often begins when someone else believes in you. When someone else says, "You can do it," this gives patients and families the confidence to actually do it.

Successes are the building blocks for more successes. Building success requires that a child's and family's efforts be acknowledged, reinforced and celebrated. One of my fondest memories of working in the Diabetes Clinic is having a 9-year-old patient tell me that she and her family had been to Chuck E. Cheese's for a party. When I asked about the occasion, she replied, "We were celebrating one year of living with diabetes!" Sometimes a celebration can be for the accomplishment of a single task. Children often report, "I did it, I did a leg shot by myself" or "I do my own finger pokes." For them, these are huge accomplishments, and they deserve to be celebrated. Doing so makes it more likely that their success will continue. These patients and families chose to focus on positive events and this helped ensure more successful diabetes management.

I know there are days that children and families struggle and are miserable. These are the days it is most important to have someone remind them of their strengths and successes, someone who believes in them and their ability to be safe and successful with diabetes management.

Many years ago, one of my patients, despite overwhelming problems, said to me, "If you don't make life happen for you, it will happen to you." This was very inspiring to me. He was focused on successes, not failures. He was making life happen for him. It is my hope that all of the children and families who have touched my life will be safe and successful with their diabetes management. Remember to make life happen for you. **D**

Healthy habits: Start 2010 right

It takes dedication and repetition to start a new habit and stick with it, but it only takes a moment to break a habit. Keep your healthy habits on track this year.

Healthy eating

1. **Plan ahead.** Keep track of your schedule, including parties and other gatherings. A little preparation will help you figure out how to fit special foods into your meal plan and make sure that exercise fits in around your social activities.
2. **Stick to your normal schedule as much as possible.** Just because special treats are available doesn't mean you need to eat them. Ask yourself a few key questions:
 - Am I hungry?
 - Would I eat this if it wasn't here?
 - Is it my normal mealtime?
 - Am I able to check my blood sugar and dose appropriately for this treat?
3. **Don't expect perfection.** Treats do have their place in a diabetes meal plan, so don't worry too much if you eat an extra one. Do your best to be aware of what foods you eat and the amount, and try to compensate later by eating smaller portions and lower-calorie foods before or after your treat. If you think you've been eating a lot, increase your exercise and keep a food journal so you can identify the times that you are most likely to overeat.



Managing stress

Stressful feelings trigger hormones that work against your body's production of insulin, which raises blood glucose levels. In addition, as your stress increases, you may not pay enough attention to your regular eating habits.

Follow these steps to help manage stress:

1. Write down the things that make you feel stressed.
2. Decide which things you can and can't control.
3. Ask others for help to control some of your more stressful issues.
4. Keep up your eating, sleeping and exercise routines.
5. Set aside time daily to relax. Don't just watch TV. Try reading, listening to music, doing a puzzle, prayer, crafts or writing in a journal.
6. If you still have trouble coping with stress, ask your diabetes providers for help. We can refer you to a counselor. **D**



Diabetes Clinic honors retiree, welcomes new staff

Jim Ellis, CDE, LCSW, will retire this year. In his role as a Children's Hospital social worker, Ellis has worked with children and families for more than 18 years, spending the past 12 years in the Diabetes Clinic. Ellis began his career with the Milwaukee Bureau of Child Welfare in 1968 and later worked in private practice with children and families at several Milwaukee-area mental health clinics.

Dawn Cvecko, CISW, is expanding her role as a social worker in the Diabetes Clinic. Cvecko has been a social worker with Children's Hospital for more than eight years, spending the last three years working with patients in the Diabetes Clinic.

Cvecko's passion for diabetes care will help patients make a smooth transition as Jim Ellis retires. She is excited to be a part of the Diabetes Clinic team and envisions her role in the program as "finding ways to help patients and families continue to be successful in their diabetes management."

Jennifer Hoag, PhD, is a pediatric psychologist who specializes in working with children and families affected by the daily challenges of living with chronic illness. She earned master's and doctorate degrees in Psychology from the Illinois Institute of Psychology, Chicago, and completed an internship in Clinical Psychology at Schneider Children's Hospital, New Hyde Park, N.Y.

Dr. Hoag views her role in the Diabetes Clinic as "intervening to promote health and psychosocial development" for our patients. **D**

Plan for 2010 health care expenses

Now is the time to consider your family's diabetes care needs and supplies for the coming year. Planning ahead can save time and money.

Here are some things to consider as you plan for your child's diabetes health and wellness:

- Review your insurance plan.
 - What are your co-payments?
 - What are your deductibles?
 - Do you prefer certain brands of diabetes supplies?
 - What is your prescription coverage?
 - What are your preferred labs or pharmacies?
- Review your employee benefits. Do they include a health care savings or flexible spending account so you can set aside pretax dollars for health care needs?
- Review your 2009 health care expenses. This will help you estimate future pharmacy costs, co-payments, lab fees, supplies and other out-of-pocket expenses so you can set aside money.

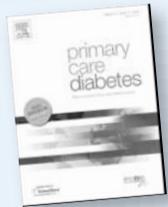


By law, Diabetes Clinic staff only may provide and prescribe enough supplies for a 30- or 90-day prescription. Our orders must reflect your actual supply use. Insurance companies regularly keep track of and review this information. Please keep accurate records of your supply use. **D**

Diabetes Dialog

Research study update

Ten patients from Children's Hospital of Wisconsin's Diabetes Clinic recently participated in a study looking for ways to improve teenagers' ability to manage their diabetes care in social situations. Results from the study, "Improving Adherence in Social Situations for Adolescents with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (T1DM): A Pilot Study," will be published in an upcoming issue of *Primary Care Diabetes*.



Researchers found that teaching problem-solving skills to teens with diabetes may be helpful in improving their ability to manage diabetes care in social situations such as school or after-school activities.

All research studies held in the Diabetes Clinic are designed to help medical professionals better understand how patients and their families adjust to and manage diabetes.

If you would like copies of research articles, please contact Jessica Kichler, PhD, CDE, at (414) 266-2932. [D](#)