Connecting with Patients to Improve Type 2 Diabetes Care

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Connect2Day™

American Diabetes Association®

Takeda
Dear Colleague,

Approximately 19-20 million Americans have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. Most of these people get their diabetes care from health care professionals like you and me. In your practice, I’m sure you see what I see—how poorly controlled diabetes can devastate a person’s health and take a toll on not only the person with diabetes but on the family members and friends who support them.

The American Diabetes Association recently worked with Takeda Pharmaceuticals U.S.A., Inc. to conduct research to better understand how people with type 2 diabetes communicate with their health care professional. In particular, we looked at what language resonates between patients and health care professionals. We found that patients felt very strongly that no one—not even health care professionals—understood what it was like to live with diabetes, and would benefit from interactions that let them know their health care professionals recognized the struggles they faced on a daily basis. We also learned that many people with diabetes do not fully grasp what’s happening to their bodies, making it more difficult to understand why they should follow some of the steps in their treatment plans. As you will see, changing the way we communicate with patients about their diabetes can make a substantial difference in how motivated they are to make lasting changes leading to better health outcomes.

As the Association’s 2014 President, Health Care & Education, I am excited to be able to share more detailed insights that emerged from this research with you, along with some tools to help aid you in your patient visits.

Inside this Patient Conversation Toolkit you’ll find:

• Summary of the Research Findings – An overview of the insights gleaned during the research
• Pocket Conversation Card – A handy reference tool featuring conversation starters to use with your patients
• Patient Education Resource Flyer – See what additional educational resources are available from the American Diabetes Association

Visit our website at www.ConnecT2DayDiabetes.com for more detailed research findings, to download an electronic version of the Patient Conversation Toolkit and to learn more about the methodology used to inform ConnecT2Day.

I know you’re already working every day to support our movement to Stop Diabetes® and to lessen the burden diabetes places on a patient’s life.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-DIABETES.

Respectfully,

Marjorie Cypress, PhD, C-ANP, CDE
2014 President, Health Care & Education
American Diabetes Association
Patients with type 2 diabetes often struggle with the constant demands of living with diabetes (diabetes distress) and have difficulty managing their disease. Research shows that education – understanding the disease as well as learning the skills for managing self-care – along with the motivation and confidence to put that education into action are critical for patients to help keep their diabetes under control.

ConnecT2Day, a collaboration between the American Diabetes Association and Takeda Pharmaceuticals U.S.A., Inc., is based on an innovative research approach – using instant response dial testing methodology and a nationwide survey – which identified important patient insights and optimal language that can help health care professionals improve their influence on how people with type 2 diabetes manage their disease.

This in-depth qualitative and quantitative primary research included a series of focus groups with 78 people living with type 2 diabetes and 24 health care professionals (total N=102). Further, a nationwide survey was then conducted with 639 people living with diabetes and 233 health care professionals (total N=872). Both phases asked participants to react to a range of messages aimed at motivating patients to better manage their diabetes with diet, exercise, medication adherence, and improved patient/physician relations.

An analysis of the data revealed patient needs and identified specific language and messages that resonate both with health care professionals and patients. It also pointed to a large gap in understanding between patients and health care professionals in how well each thought patients were doing managing their diabetes, signaling a critical need for better communication.

Health care professionals overwhelmingly (97%) said they would value having additional resources to help them better communicate with their patients about better managing their disease.

### How Patients Feel

**Overwhelmed:** Every decision has to be weighed against my diabetes

**Guilty:** I don’t always have the willpower to do the right thing

**Frustrated:** My health care professional doesn’t understand how all-consuming this disease can be

### Diabetes is everywhere, always

People with type 2 diabetes feel there is not a moment in their day when diabetes “leaves them alone.” From morning until night, they feel overwhelmed with thoughts of food, decisions that need to be made when it’s time to eat, and the pressure from social situations in which food is involved.

ConnecT2Day research is Takeda Pharmaceuticals data on file.
When food isn’t on their minds, the lack of energy and inability to live a “totally normal life” is.

And, when they fall behind on their treatment goals, they often feel like they’ll never succeed, so they might as well just give up.

“For a while, I felt good. I was doing it! And then after a certain number of years... I fell off. I just feel like it just doesn’t really matter! It’s an ongoing battle.”

– Patient, Los Angeles

The hardest part – giving up the foods they love

Across the board, patients said learning to eat healthier and lose weight were the hardest parts of living with diabetes.

They noted that, while it wasn’t easy to exercise and take medication, they’d much rather deal with those hurdles than give up the foods they loved.

No one really understands what it’s like

Whether it’s true or not, people who have type 2 diabetes feel constantly judged for having this disease, by family and friends, strangers, their health care professionals, and even themselves.

They often feel like their health care professionals aren’t even listening to them – that they’re not being given personalized treatment options.

When this happens, they’re less likely to act on a health care professional’s advice.

Opening the conversation with expressions of understanding and sympathy are critical to getting patients to listen to their health care recommendations.

What Patients Know (Or Don’t Know)

Diabetes is a lifestyle disease

Patients react well to descriptions of type 2 diabetes as a “lifestyle disease,” even though they don’t think it reflects the choices they’ve made that led to its development.

They think of this phrase in terms of how the disease forever changes their daily lives, from having to say “no” to cake at a birthday party to feeling intense guilt every time they make a mistake and slip up in their treatment. Calling it a “lifestyle disease” helps them shift the onus away from their behavior and onto the medical condition.

Improving the patient-health care professional dialogue must begin with the ability to imagine everyday life through the eyes, experiences, and ever-present self-doubt of someone living with type 2 diabetes.

ConnecT2Day research is Takeda Pharmaceuticals data on file.
They don’t know what’s happening to their bodies

They may understand that their bodies can’t process glucose, but that’s often as far as it goes.

What they do seem to know is that they’re supposed to eat healthier, exercise more, and take their medication. They just don’t understand how or why that would help. To make matters worse, they often doubt their ability to do so or feel it wouldn’t do them any good.

If they don’t understand how it’s going to help their bodies, how can patients possibly understand why they should follow their health care professional’s advice?

They believe positive change is within immediate reach and within their power, while negative consequences are a long way off.

Overall, patients responded better to positive statements about how they could control their diabetes than negative ones about what would happen if they didn’t.

For example, if diabetes is managed well, 81% said they believed they could have more energy/feel better within the next year; 76% said they could lower their blood pressure within that time frame, and 74% said it would get easier to manage their diabetes and become routine with a year’s time.

Yet on the flip side, only 26% said they were concerned that they could lose a limb in the near future (within the next 5 years). Only 30% were concerned they could lose their eyesight in that time frame, and only 32% saw kidney failure as an immediate threat.

What Health Care Professionals Can Do Better

Give them “a better 10 minutes”

Patients understand that health care professionals are busy and can’t spend a long time talking to them at each visit. But they want to feel like their health care professional is really listening to them during the time they have together.

• They want to be sure that they are heard
• They do want their health care professional to make eye contact and show he or she is listening

“He only has a certain amount of time with you...But he says, ‘How are you doing?’ and he’s typing. He only hears me sorta-kind.”

– Patient, Chicago

Patients feel more committed to their treatment programs when they believe their health care professionals truly hear and understand what they’re saying. Whenever possible, give patients your full attention, acknowledge their concerns, and let them know you’re thinking about how to help them as individuals.

Tailor treatment to patient needs

One way health care professionals can show patients they are listening is to ask patients about their lifestyle, needs and experiences, and incorporate these into the treatment plan.

“My internist tried getting me to exercise. I said I’d rather sit in a comfy chair and read a book. So she suggested I get ear buds and take a walk and listen to the book. BING! I do it now.”

– Patient, Los Angeles

The more they feel like their treatment plan is unique to them and their needs, the more they report a willingness to stick with it.

Build a Partnership

Patients want understanding, but they also value their health care professionals as advisors and motivators. They know they are not the experts; they just want someone to listen to their side, explain what’s happening to them, and show them how to feel better in ways that they can achieve. Explain that all members of the patient’s health care team are on board and working together. Patients are more invested in their success when it’s clear that everyone else is too.

ConncT2Day research is Takeda Pharmaceuticals data on file.
What Health Care Professionals Can Say

Ways to Frame a Conversation

• Listen and understand
• Use simple language
• Focus on the positive effects of proper self-care
• Encourage gradual lifestyle changes

Listen and understand

Patients feel ignored, misunderstood, and often lonely. It’s easier for them to get motivated when they know someone is on their side. Telling them you understand how hard it is to live with diabetes and how tough it is to make these lifestyle changes can make a big difference in how much a patient listens to and ultimately trusts you.

Use simple language

Use simple, everyday language to explain what it means to have diabetes and why it makes patients feel the way they do. Connect the body’s malfunction (its failure, not the person’s failure) to the lack of energy they may be experiencing.

Don’t be afraid to explain what is happening medically with diabetes in layman’s terms. Helping patients understand what’s happening inside their bodies isn’t always easy, but it is helpful to patients. Here’s one explanation that 87% of patients said made sense to them:

Focus on the positive effects of proper self-care

Patients do need and want to know about potential complications if they don’t adhere to treatment, but the language of fear and “threats” does not necessarily motivate people with diabetes to change their behavior in fundamental ways for the rest of their lives.

Focus on the positive gains they can make – especially how much more energy they will have to do the things they enjoy – if they stick to their treatment plans. The benefits of good diabetes management are viewed more favorably by patients than the fear of complications.

Encourage gradual lifestyle changes

When presented with detailed, comprehensive plans of ways in which their lives need to change, patients see these as unattainable goals. While nobody is suggesting that you lower the bar in terms of medical goals, patients are more positively disposed to manageable, step-by-step changes that they feel they can master – one at a time.

“That word – gradually. You can’t change overnight because you didn’t get here overnight.”

– Patient, Los Angeles

When you have diabetes, your body can’t process sugar as well as it should, which causes your blood sugar levels to rise higher than normal. When these levels are too high over an extended period of time, there may be some serious health risks at stake.

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American Diabetes Association

FOR MORE DETAILED RESEARCH FINDINGS VISIT CONNECT2DAYDIABETES.COM
Effectively communicating with your type 2 diabetes patients can help improve diabetes care and their self-management of the disease. The more they feel like you can relate to them and their life, the more likely they are to see the relationship as a success. The dialogue starters below can help guide your conversation with patients.

**INCORPORATING TREATMENT INTO ROUTINES**

“I know diabetes can make life very difficult. It is a complicated disease that can affect almost everything you do. Eventually, though, managing your diabetes will become something that’s part of your daily routine. It won’t feel like something you have to work as hard at. Tell me how it’s affecting your day-to-day life right now.”

**LISTENING AND USING SIMPLE LANGUAGE**

“My job is to help you understand what’s happening to your body and what gradual changes you can make to feel better more often. Tell me what you are having the hardest time with.”
MANAGING UPS AND DOWNS

“Sticking to a treatment plan isn’t easy, but it’s important if you want to smooth out the ups and downs. Which parts of your treatment plan are the most challenging for you? Let’s talk about how we can make it work for you.”

ENCOURAGING GOAL-SETTING

“Obviously our long-term goal is to get and keep your diabetes under control so that you can feel better more often and avoid complications. But that’s not going to happen overnight. Let’s talk about some first steps you can take that will get you moving in the right direction.”

FOCUSING ON THE POSITIVE

“One of the keys to living with diabetes is to understand that you CAN live well with it, you CAN manage it. Let’s talk about what’s giving you the hardest time and see what changes you can make so things are a little easier for you.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT CONNECT2DAYDIABETES.COM

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Takeda

American Diabetes Association®
TOOLS & RESOURCES from the American Diabetes Association for Professionals Treating Patients with Diabetes

ConnecT2Day™
ConnecT2Day offers new research-based patient communication tools and resources for those health care professionals who are looking for additional ways to optimize their influence on patients’ self-management of type 2 diabetes. Visit ConnecT2DayDiabetes.com

Clinical Corner on DiabetesPro
Our professional website is dedicated to the health care professional who is working with patients who are living with diabetes - includes clinical guidelines and online patient materials. Visit professional.diabetes.org/clinical

Living with Type 2 Diabetes
This year-long program sends enrollees information about living with type 2 diabetes, new recipes to try and opportunities to find support from others living with diabetes. Help your newly diagnosed patients enroll in the FREE Living with Type 2 Diabetes program. Visit diabetes.org/atdx

Patient Education Materials
The American Diabetes Association has a wide range of patient education materials about diabetes, its management and its complications. Find brochures available for purchase on shopdiabetes.org. Select materials are also available for free digital download so that you can print at your convenience on our professional website. Visit diabetes.org/pro

Special Programs
The Association also has content and programs that have been developed for disparately affected groups and those with special needs. These include:
- American Indians and Alaska Natives
- Hispanics/Latinos
- African Americans
- Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders
- Children and Students
- Seniors
Visit diabetes.org/awareness

*ConnecT2Day was conducted in collaboration with Takeda Pharmaceuticals U.S.A., Inc.*
The mission of The American Diabetes Association is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes.

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