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Exploring the Role of Parental Emotional Involvement in the Management of Type 1 Diabetes in Children

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Abstract

The emotional involvement of parents of children with type 1 diabetes impacts the management of the disease. Distress about the sickness, fear of hypoglycemia, anxiety about the use of technology, or questioning of self-efficacy all influence the parent's attitude. Our research explores how parental emotional involvement shapes behavioral patterns in managing type 1 diabetes of children aged 5-14 years. 403 parents participated in a questionnaire survey. The following measures were used: 1) Fear of Hypoglycaemia (FHP) to explore related anxiety and behaviors to avoid hypoglycemia; 2) Diabetes Distress (P-PAID-C) to measure distress related to diabetes care; 3) Diabetes Specific Technology Attitude of Use (DSAT) to assess general attitudes towards diabetes technologies. Using Latent Profile Analysis (LPA), five types of attitudinal patterns related to diabetes management were identified: 'Inactives' (13.0%) with low levels of anxiety and hypoglycemia-preventing behaviors; 'Worriers' (32.6%) with high levels of anxiety and proactive behaviors; 'Balanced' (31.1%) with moderate anxiety and proactive behaviors; 'Confidents' (10.0%) with low anxiety and low proactivity; and 'Over-insurers' (13.3%) with high proactivity to avoid hypoglycemia but low levels of anxiety. Significant differences in the age of parents and children in the levels of diabetes-related stress and self-efficacy were observed between the profiles. From a public health perspective, these results underscore the importance of integrating emotional support components into parental education programs and diabetes care interventions. Strengthening emotional coping mechanisms in parents may lead to improved pediatric diabetes outcomes avoiding the long-term consequences.

Keywords: behavioral profiles; fear of hypoglycaemia; illness-related distress; latent profile analysis