

Type 1 diabetes and work life

If my abstract is accepted I prefer an oral presentation.

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Background

Today more than 300,000 Danes are diagnosed with diabetes. Of these approximately 10% have type 1 diabetes. As the working population with type 1 diabetes spends one third of their time at work, diabetes management in work life is expected to significantly impact the overall care and quality of (work) life with diabetes. So far however, little attention has been paid to the challenges of balancing the demands of diabetes management with the demands of work life. This study explores work life from the perspective of people with type 1 diabetes.

Theoretical frame and method

Applying symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) as the overarching methodology, we focussed on the meaning making and practices of people with type 1 diabetes in exploring illness behaviour in work life. The study design is made up of 40 explorative interviews with people with type 1 diabetes followed by a questionnaire linked with medical records data (data collection in autumn 2016). Interviewees represented a broad range of educational and occupational levels (17 men), mean age 49 years (23-69), mean diabetes duration 32 years (9-60).

Main results and conclusions

The explorative interviews indicate that people with type 1 diabetes experience tension between the demands of work life and the demands of routinized diabetes management. In balancing these demands they have to stretch available resources to appear as 'good workers' while sustaining themselves as 'good patients'. Many interviewees struggle in reconciling diabetes and work life and they worry about their future workability as well as their health. Building on this knowledge the survey analysis will examine how work-related factors, diabetes-related factors and psychosocial factors are associated with work-related diabetes distress among the working population with type 1 diabetes.

Practical implications

Diabetes is expected to be a bigger issue at the workplace in the future with implications for the individual person with diabetes, the workplace as well as the wider society. Knowledge about which factors impact on the quality of work life in people with type 1 diabetes is therefore relevant to guide future interventions.

Key references

Blumer, H. (1969). Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall