



Diabetes is now widely recognized as one of the top public health threats facing our nation today. More than 18 million Americans are currently living with the disease, a number that is estimated to increase to 29 million by the year 2050. In 2002, diabetes accounted for \$132 billion in direct and indirect healthcare costs.

One solution to this burgeoning problem is to make diabetes self-management training provided by a certified diabetes educator widely available to patients. “Diabetes self-management education is an integral component of medical care.” (National Diabetes Education Fact Sheet – U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

WHAT is diabetes self-management training?

Diabetes self-management training, also called diabetes education, provides knowledge and skills training to patients with diabetes, helping them identify barriers, facilitate critical thinking and problem solving and develop coping skills to effectively manage their diabetes. Initial diabetes self-management training occurs over a four to six month period, with periodic follow-up well beyond this.

The goal of diabetes self-management training is to enable the person with diabetes to live a healthy life and avoid or minimize the costly complications associated with the disease.

To achieve maximum benefit, diabetes self-management training must be provided by a healthcare professional who is trained to fully address the clinical practicalities and nuances of the disease, and one who has a direct relationship with a patient over a period of time. That person is a certified diabetes educator.

WHO are certified diabetes educators?

A certified diabetes educator (CDE) is a licensed healthcare professional – often a nurse, dietitian or pharmacist – who specializes in helping people with diabetes learn the self-management skills needed to overcome the daily challenges and problems caused by the disease.

CDEs work with patients over time to develop problem-solving strategies and offer guidance and coaching to establish achievable, individualized treatment plans that are adapted to patients’ daily lives. They counsel patients on how to incorporate healthy eating and physical activity into their life. They also help patients understand how their medications work, teach them how to monitor their blood glucose to avoid the risk of complications, and give them the ability to problem solve and adjust emotionally to diabetes.

To earn the CDE designation, a health care professional must be licensed or registered, or have received an advanced degree in a relevant public health concentration. They must have professional practice experience, meet minimum hours requirements in diabetes self-management training, pass a rigorous national exam and meet recertification requirements.

WHERE do certified diabetes educators practice?

Diabetes self-management training programs employ a multi-disciplinary approach to patient education. CDEs work in a variety of settings including hospitals, physician practices,

pharmacies, disease management or health management programs, clinics or home healthcare agencies. They may also be in private practice or work in a stand-alone diabetes self-management program.

WHY is diabetes self-management training so critical?

Diabetes requires constant vigilance on the part of the patient. It is an extremely complex disease that demands more than just taking pills or insulin injections at the right time of day. Patients have to become experts in weight management, physical fitness and blood sugar control. They also need to know how to detect warning signs of complications. CDEs are skilled at helping patients understand their disease and give them the tools they need to stay healthy and avoid costly and debilitating acute and secondary conditions.

Because diabetes is primarily a self-managed disease, education in self-management skills is essential in implementing interventions. An effective program involves acquisition of self-management knowledge and skills, which translate into behavioral changes. Initial and ongoing self-management education must be made available to all patients with diabetes.

- Implementation Conference for ACE Outpatient Diabetes Mellitus Consensus Conference Recommendations, February 2005

“No diabetes management tool – no new oral agent, insulin or medical device – is as important as the services of a certified diabetes educator.”

- Christopher Saudek, MD, Professor of Medicine at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD