

Module IV-4

The older adult

Overview

In many countries the prevalence rate of diabetes increases significantly with age. As people age, their ability to cope with living, to learn new information and remain independent varies greatly. Older people with diabetes may have more disabilities, diabetes complications, and decreased ability to manage diabetes compared with younger people with diabetes. Therefore, they may need special care for their diabetes. Older people are not a homogeneous group and, therefore, it is important to treat them as individuals and address their personal needs.

Goal

To provide participants with the opportunity to consolidate their understanding of the special psychosocial, educational, nutritional, functional and physical requirements of older people with diabetes

Objectives

After completing this module the participant will be able to:

- Define why special consideration is required in the management and education of older people with diabetes
- Define the issues to be considered when assessing the different treatment options and goals with older people
- Describe the factors that need to be considered when deciding on medication treatment with older people with diabetes, and the ways to increase medication safety
- Describe the increased risk of unawareness of hypoglycaemia and HHS in older people with diabetes, and relevant preventive strategies
- Recognize that older people are at increased risk of falling, and consider the diabetes-specific factors that contribute to falls in the elderly
- Recognize the specific precautions that apply to older people with diabetes undergoing surgical procedures or having investigations that involve the use of intravenous dyes – such as radiopaque contrast media
- Recognize that older people are an ‘at risk’ group with regards to nutrition (refer to [Module III-5, Nutrition therapy](#))

- Define the factors that need to be considered when assessing the exercise requirements and abilities of this group
- Describe the strategies required to assess the educational needs of older people
- Extrapolate this information to assist in the selection of appropriate educational methods and resources
- Outline the resources available in the community for older people
- Extrapolate this information to assist in the planning of safe and appropriate diabetes care for older people
- Discuss the management of older people in residential care facilities

Teaching strategy

Case study to highlight the special medical, social, nutritional, and psychological requirements of an elderly person with diabetes

Suggested time

1 hour

Who should teach this module

Diabetes educator, dietitian, geriatrician

Evaluation of learning

Development of a management plan for an older person
Assignment – description of the diabetes care available to older people in the particular country

References

California Healthcare Foundation/American Geriatrics Society Panel on Improving Care for Elders with Diabetes. Guidelines for improving the care of the older person with diabetes mellitus. *J Am Geriatr Soc* 2003; 51 (Suppl 5): S265-S280.

Griffiths R, Johnson M, Piper M, Langdon R. A nursing intervention for the quality use of medicines by elderly community clients. *Int J Nurs Pract* 2004; 10: 166-76.

Kirkland F. Improvements in diabetes care for elderly people in care homes. *J Diabetes Nurs* 2000; 4: 150-5.

Ko LSF, Cheng YH, Leung EMF, Mok JWS. Information-giving and its effect on elderly patients' adherence. *Hong Kong Med J* 2007; 13 (Suppl 3); 4-8.

Mccloskey B. *Diabetes in the elderly*. In Complete Nurse's Guide to Diabetes Care. Belinda PC (Ed). ADA. Alexandria, 2005: 311-8.

Shashikiran U, Vidyasagar S, Prabhu MM. Diabetes in the elderly. *The Internet Journal of Geriatrics and Gerontology* 2004; 1 (2). <http://www.ispub.com>

Sinclair A, Finucane P. *Diabetes in old age* 2nd edition. John Wiley and Sons. Chichester, 2001.

Turnheim K. Drug therapy in the elderly. *Exp Gerontol* 2004; 39: 1731-8.