

Writer's Memo: "Characterization of Diabetes Distress: Assessing Demographic, Clinical, Behavioral, and Psychosocial Correlates"

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I wrote "Characterization of Diabetes Distress: Assessing Demographic, Clinical, Behavioral, and Psychosocial Correlates" for a course I took in fall of 2019 at the University of Florida titled Writing in Medicine. For one of our final assignments in this course, we were instructed to write a review paper on a topic of our choice. At the time of this course, I was conducting research surrounding the role of regulatory T cells in preventing type 1 diabetes development within the UF Diabetes Institute. Thus, when I began to brainstorm topics for my review paper, I found myself drawn to existing research surrounding type 1 diabetes.

While I originally anticipated writing a review paper regarding the pathophysiology of type 1 diabetes, after diving into existing literature I kept encountering an unfamiliar term—"diabetes distress." Upon reading more, I found myself intrigued by this term—defined as the emotional burden that accompanies diabetes and its demanding self-care behaviors. Although I had investigated the mechanism of type 1 diabetes in my wet-lab research, I had not previously explored the psychological impact of diabetes—nor had I truly considered how living with diabetes might affect someone's mental health.

After further research, I soon became aware of the prevalence of diabetes distress, its demonstrated clinical significance, and its lack of adequate current assessment in a clinical setting. Thus, I determined that there was a need to identify the factors associated with this condition. Although previous literature has suggested the relationship between diabetes distress and several demographic, clinical, psychosocial, and behavioral measures, there is a lack of extensive reviews that summarize such findings. My medical review therefore sought to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the factors associated with diabetes distress for use in its proper identification and subsequent intervention.