

Podcast transcript for Diabetes Education Toolkit

Recorded by Judith Cook and Jessica Jonikas

Announcer: Thank you for visiting the University of Illinois at Chicago's Health & Recovery Solutions Suite. The following recording comes to you from the UIC Center on Integrated Health Care and Self-Directed Recovery. Visit our online Solutions Suite to obtain free tools that promote health, self-direction, and employment for the behavioral health field.

JJ: Hello. My name is Jessica Jonikas. I'm here with Dr. Judith Cook, Director of the University of Illinois at Chicago Center on Integrated Health Care and Self-Directed Recovery. Today, we'll be talking about an online tool called the *Diabetes Education Toolkit*, which is available from the UIC Solutions Suite.

JJ: Thanks for joining me today, Judith. Before we talk about the toolkit, could you tell our listeners why it is important to know about diabetes?

JC: Sure Jessica. Around 15% of people with serious mental health conditions have diabetes. Yet only a third of them receive a diagnosis and treatment. The relationship between the two conditions flows both ways: having diabetes increases your risk of developing a mental health disorder, and having a mental health disorder increases your risk of developing diabetes. People with diabetes are at risk for other conditions such as heart and kidney disease, high blood pressure, nerve damage, eye disease, and blindness. If you're in mental health recovery, or work with people who are, chances are you've met a number of people with diabetes.

JJ: I think all of this could be news to some of our listeners. It sounds like there's a need for more information and education about diabetes.

JC: There is. That's why we created the *Diabetes Education Toolkit*. We wanted it to be useful for people who have diabetes, their medical and behavioral health care providers, supporters, and other caregivers. If you're a service provider who is new to the area of diabetes, the toolkit will give you the knowledge you need to educate the people you work with. If you have diabetes, you can use the Toolkit to learn how to better manage your health and mental health. If you're a primary care provider, you can use materials from the toolkit to educate your patients, and also to learn more about the intersection of mental health and diabetes.

JJ: It seems like the toolkit meets many different needs. Can you tell us more about that?

JC: The toolkit is an online resource with several parts. The first is a diabetes library that includes one-page information sheets that are easy to understand. These cover topics like the basics of diabetes, building and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, medical tests and how to interpret their results, and ways to manage the risks of diabetes. Another part of the toolkit covers the American Diabetes Association's standards of care, with information about what each standard involves. Another section has podcasts on different ways to manage your diabetes, including recordings by people with diabetes. Finally, there's a section on how to use the Toolkit, with suggestions designed specifically for patients, providers, and supporters.

JJ: The library of user-friendly information sounds especially important.

JC: Yes, that's true. The library includes 50 one-page handouts that are written at a 5th grade reading level. They cover a wide variety of topics including what diabetes is and how it affects

the body, how to manage the risks of diabetes, and how diabetes and mental health interact. Some popular handouts deal with psychiatric medications and diabetes, and mixing diabetes and alcohol. A number of the handouts contain simple, effective suggestions about how to eat healthy, exercise, drink enough water, and live a full life with diabetes. All of the information is documented from reliable sources.

JJ: That all sounds great and so relevant, but 50 handouts is a lot. Do people need to read all of them to use the Toolkit?

JC: Absolutely not. People can explore the handouts at their own pace, reading only those that are of personal interest.

JJ: You mentioned standards of care. What are those and why are they important?

JC: Care standards come from the American Diabetes Association. They specify what tests and treatments are needed to help people with diabetes stay healthy. These include getting medical tests such as A1c, blood pressure, and cholesterol. They also include having a dilated eye exam and foot exam. The care standards section of the Toolkit relates each standard to the test or exam that should be done, describes normal and abnormal test results, and takes the reader to selections from the library concerning the standard.

JJ: I'm wondering how does the Toolkit help people relate the standards of care to their own health?

JC: I'll give you an example. Let's say your doctor gives you a list of your test results and you wonder what they mean. If you click on the care standard called HBA1c testing, you learn that it's a blood test that should be done twice a year for people whose diabetes is under control. You also find out that the test shows the average amount of glucose in the blood over the past few months. This is used to assess a person's long term blood glucose management. Click further, and you'll go to a page with more information on the meaning of different A1c levels. The page also includes handouts related to managing your blood glucose through nutrition and exercise. For example, one handout covers the best foods to eat when living with diabetes, and fast food alternatives to help control blood glucose. By clicking on each standard, you learn how diabetes should be treated, and then you can click further to get health and lifestyle suggestions.

JJ: I'm guessing that some of our listeners are wondering what to do if they want to use the toolkit with someone who doesn't have internet access.

JC: Everything in the toolkit can be printed, including transcripts of the podcasts. This allows providers and other supporters to give people information gradually, in small doses, like you get when you click through a web site. It also helps people who are using the toolkit on their own to avoid being overloaded with information.

JJ: It sounds like a great tool for any community-based program. Would you give us an example of how it's being used?

JC: We introduced the toolkit to a behavioral health home in Chicago. That's a primary care clinic located within a mental health center. We met with the medical staff to demonstrate how the toolkit works and discussed ways to integrate it into their patient appointments. They used it whenever they wanted to share the results of diabetes-related medical tests.

JC: For example, to explain cholesterol results, they first clicked on the care standard about cholesterol testing to show patients that it should be done at least annually. Another click took them to information to help explain to patients what the test is and how to understand the results. Then, they let patients decide which handouts to choose. People could pick the one on carbohydrates, the one on adding healthy fats and fiber to one's diet, and other handouts on managing cholesterol. Sometimes, the providers listened to one of the podcasts with their patients, especially the one recorded by a nurse about how she learned to manage her diabetes and depression successfully.

JJ: What an excellent use of the toolkit. I can think of many ways it could be used in both medical practices and community mental health programs. Thank you for sharing this exciting tool with us, Judith. I also want to thank our audience for tuning in to hear about it. We are pleased to offer the *Diabetes Education Toolkit* as part of our Solutions Suite to promote wellness and self-direction for people in recovery from mental health conditions.

Announcer: Thank you for listening. You can obtain additional Solutions Suite recordings, or download a transcript, by visiting the Center's web site.