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STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING LIFE TRANSITIONS IN YOUNG ADULTS WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

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Background
The study aimed to identify key life transition issues likely to impact on diabetes self-care among young adults with Type 1 diabetes. The relationship among psychosocial stress, adjustment, coping and metabolic control has a key effect on diabetes clinical outcomes and mental health. Life transitions are peak times of major change within personal and social contexts, which adds stress that affects peoples’ problem solving abilities. For young people with Type 1 diabetes, the added stress often makes controlling blood glucose levels difficult during transitions. Specific strategies to assist young people with diabetes dealing with issues during transitions are not currently available.

Method
Data were collected using taped interviews, which were transcribed and systematically analysed using constant comparative analysis and a coding system to identify key categories.

Result
The findings showed that transitions were particularly related to social changes for example, moving out of home, commencing study, entering the workforce or when preparing for and entering motherhood. Transitional changes resulted in high levels of uncertainty, vulnerability, a sense of lack of control, difficulties associated with when to disclose diabetes, and fear of judgmental responses from people in their social networks, including health professionals. The main strategies young people used to overcome these difficulties were taking control of diabetes management and self-care, connecting with other people with diabetes, staying positive, putting diabetes in perspective and being organised.

Conclusion
The study outcome demonstrates the importance of an individualised and collaborative approach to facilitate meaningful communication between health professionals and young people. The presentation will focus on the strategies used to manage transitions and highlight some of the recommendations to clinical practice when striving to improve health service delivery for young people with Type 1 diabetes.