

Diabetes in School—An Important Challenge

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Background and Aims

To handle diabetes self-care is a challenge for everyone but especially for children during the school day. School attendance is a prerequisite for a successful academic performance, but studies show that children with diabetes, at least historically, exhibit reduced performance in comparison to healthy children. This can be due to a lack of competent adult support in insulin treatment during the school day, resulting in a high glucose variability with hypo- and hyperglycaemia, affecting brain function. It can also be caused by parental fear of hypoglycemia, which can lead to less school attendance, i.e., during sport days.

Materials and Methods

A couple of studies have been performed in Sweden before and after a piece of legislation was implemented in 2009, stating that all children have a right to get adult support in their diabetes self-care during the school day [1]. The effect of this legislation has improved the situation for children with diabetes and made parents feel more confident to send their child to school [2]. ISPAD has published a new chapter 2018 on diabetes in school and soon thereafter as a complement, a strong position statement [3,4]. This paper states that “The principles of this ISPAD Position Statement on Type 1 Diabetes in Schools should be applicable globally. ISPAD strongly supports compliance with legal protections for children and adolescents with type 1 diabetes to attend school, to be safe at school, and to receive optimal medical management at school and in all school associated activities”. In this position statement, the diabetes education of all school personnel is mandatory but divided into three levels, depending on the individual, every-day responsibilities for the child.

Results

A guideline or even an international position statement has to be followed by legislation on a national level to have a true impact for the children in need of special support. In Sweden, it has been shown that such legislation has made a difference [5].

Conclusions

Children with diabetes have a brighter future than ever before if their need for extra support during the school day is ensured. A young child should put the energy and effort on the demanding learning process in school, without unnecessarily being troubled by thoughts of the glycaemic control. A teenage student with type 1 diabetes is often mature enough to solve problems with the diabetes self-care during a school day, even if the parental support at home still is essential for many years.

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