

Australasian young adults' transition from paediatric to adult diabetes services: a complex picture of choice and access

K. Gilbert¹, M. Seed¹

1. The Type 1 Diabetes Network, www.d1.org.au

Transition from paediatric to adult care is recognised as a major problem in type 1 diabetes care. The Type 1 Diabetes Network, a consumer group, undertook an online survey to investigate young adults' experiences of 'transition'.

168 people (24% male, median age group 26-30 years) living in Australia or New Zealand during their transition period (16-20 years of age) described their use of health services.

The literature describes optimal transition as supported transfer from paediatric diabetes services to adolescent-focused services in the adult system: 4% of respondents reported this as their experience.

33 (20%) were newly-diagnosed during this period. The remaining 135 had diabetes since childhood. 51% attended a children's hospital for paediatric care, 50% private endocrinologist, 18% adult hospital and 3% saw only a GP.

Of those who attended children's hospital (n=69), transition involved: children's hospital made appointment in adult system (22%), given the details of adult hospital (26%), all dealings through parents (20%), 'I stayed away from hospitals and doctors after I was too old for children's care' (22%), 'I looked into options myself and found somewhere to go' (6%).

First contact with the adult system was reported as public 'transition' clinic (16%), general diabetes clinic (28%), private endocrinologist (49%), diabetes nurse educator (11%) or GP (8%).

The literature on young adults' experiences of transition almost exclusively draws target populations from either paediatric or young adult clinics in public hospitals. This study suggests there may be significant numbers of adolescents outside of these services. New diagnoses occur frequently in the transition age and need to be considered in service development. Information and support outside of the traditional health services, such as websites and peer networks, may be important for supporting the entire population of adolescents with diabetes.