



The Australian Centre
for Behavioural Research
in Diabetes

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World's first clinical guideline on diabetes distress

The Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes (ACBRD) welcomes groundbreaking, evidence-based recommendations on the assessment and management of diabetes distress, announced today at the 61st annual meeting of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD) in Vienna.

This milestone represents the world's first evidence-based guideline dedicated to this crucial aspect of diabetes care, and is also the EASD's inaugural clinical practice guideline. It fills a significant gap in clinical practice by providing healthcare professionals with comprehensive strategies for assessing and addressing the emotional burden experienced by people living with diabetes.

"As researchers dedicated to understanding the psychological dimensions of diabetes, we are thrilled to see this area of care receive the recognition it deserves through the EASD's inaugural clinical guideline," said Dr Elizabeth Holmes-Truscott, Deputy Director of ACBRD. *"This represents a watershed moment where diabetes distress moves from being an overlooked aspect of care to becoming a central component of quality diabetes management."*

Understanding Diabetes Distress: A Hidden Challenge

Diabetes distress is a complex, negative emotional response to living with diabetes – including frustrations with glucose levels and their management, worries about complications, overwhelm with daily self-care demands, and strain in relationships due to diabetes. Research shows that approximately one-third of adults with diabetes experience clinically significant diabetes distress, while up to 80% report that specific aspects of diabetes management cause moderate to severe problems in their lives.

A key strength of the guideline lies in its inclusive development process, which engaged people with lived experience of diabetes meaningfully as members of the Guideline Development Panel throughout the two-year process.

Alison Robinson, an Associate Research Fellow at the ACBRD, offered her perspective: *"As someone who lives with type 1 diabetes and works in this field, I know firsthand that the emotional challenges can be as demanding as the physical management. The guideline is grounded in real-world challenges, which shows that people with lived experience were involved throughout. This validates the experiences of people like me and provides healthcare professionals with the practical guidance and tools to address this aspect of diabetes care, which has been missing for far too long."*

EASD Recommendations Align with ACBRD's Research and Advocacy

Routine Assessment: The guideline advocates for routine identification of diabetes distress using open-ended questions and validated tools – methods that ACBRD researchers have helped develop and validate in diverse populations.

Tailored Intervention Strategies: Evidence-based recommendations support various intervention approaches, from structured psychological therapies to peer support programs and glucose monitoring technologies. This reflects research demonstrating that various strategies are needed to support individuals, dependent on their type of diabetes and their experience of diabetes distress.

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Collaborative Care Models: The emphasis on person-centred approaches and shared decision-making mirrors the ACBRD's advocacy for respectful, individualised care that is tailored to each person's unique circumstances, priorities and preferences.

Local Experts Shape Global Guidance

The EASD's Guideline Development Panel has met every fortnight for the past two years to develop this guideline. The Co-Chairs of the Panel were Professor Jane Speight – who is the Foundation Director of the ACBRD and Chair of the international PsychoSocial Aspects of Diabetes (PSAD) Study Group – and Professor Richard Holt (University of Southampton, UK).

Professor Speight's role in co-leading the guideline, demonstrates the international influence of ACBRD's work to address the unmet needs of people living with diabetes and their healthcare professionals. *"The evidence base supporting these guidelines represents decades of rigorous research demonstrating that diabetes distress is common, significantly impacts both emotional and physical health, and can be assessed and addressed in routine clinical consultations,"* said Professor Speight.

Implementation and Future Directions

The guideline is accessible through the EASD website: https://www.easd.org/uploads/Final-Draft_EASD-Diabetes-Distress-Guideline.pdf

The ACBRD encourages all people living with diabetes, healthcare professionals, policymakers, and diabetes organisations to engage with the guideline during its **consultation period**, which closes on **31 October 2025**.

"This guideline provides the roadmap, and successful implementation will require sustained efforts across community engagement, training, service delivery, and system-level support," said Dr Holmes-Truscott. *"Our Centre is committed to supporting implementation through our research, resources and training programs for health professionals, and collaborations with healthcare systems across Australia and internationally."*

"This launch represents recognition that addressing the emotional side of diabetes is a crucial aspect of 21st century diabetes care," concluded Professor Speight. *"We encourage people with diabetes, their health professionals and diabetes organisations to advocate for adaptation of the European guideline for the Australian context. We look forward to working with colleagues across Australia and globally to ensure these evidence-based recommendations transform the lives of people with diabetes."*

About the Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes (ACBRD)

Established in 2010, the ACBRD is Australia's first and only national research centre dedicated to the psychological, social, and behavioural aspects of diabetes. It is a partnership for better health between Diabetes Victoria and Deakin University. The ACBRD conducts world-leading research to improve the health and quality of life of people living with or affected by all types of diabetes. The Centre's team works collaboratively with people with lived experience, healthcare professionals, and policymakers to deliver and translate research into practice and policy improvements.

For media inquiries and interview requests, please contact:

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Learn more about the ACBRD: www.acbrd.org.au

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