

Book review

Diabetes Through the Looking Glass: Seeing Diabetes From Your Child's Perspective



Helen Thornton

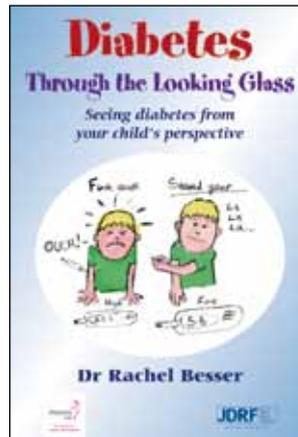
This unique book should be recommended reading for all parents of children diagnosed with type 1 diabetes and the healthcare professionals who provide their care. Dr Rachel Besser provides a combination of up-to-date, factual information on diabetes and its management with personal narratives and reflection from a range of young people and young adults who all live with diabetes.

It can be read as a whole book or individual chapters selected for those who wish to dip in and out of its contents as things become relevant in their lives.

The book explores in detail the impact that the diagnosis of type 1 diabetes has on a family as a whole and, through case history and discussion, demonstrates the resilience that children and young people can show at this time. It also provides valuable guidance through its questions and answers on how to cope with the emotional turmoil felt by families at diagnosis.

The book provides excellent reference material for families on the day-to-day management of diabetes, including hypoglycaemia, blood testing, insulin time, exercise management, hyperglycaemia and complications, and food and eating. The writing style enables these topics to be explored in such a way as to give others insight into the emotional impact of having to manage diabetes and the demands placed on children and young people from those around them, with many practical suggestions on how to better support them.

Dr Besser has not been frightened to explore some of the more taboo subjects such as hypoglycaemia avoidance by missing insulin, fictitious blood-test results and eating disorders. Her no-nonsense approach may enable families to recognise what is happening earlier and seek emotional wellbeing support for their son or daughter from their diabetes team, rather than living in denial that “my child would never miss insulin”.



Author: Rachel Besser
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There is a very good section on the management of diabetes in school, which includes the current legislation to support young people with diabetes, with many practical hints and tips. It also explores the social aspects of school that could be affected by diabetes, such as expectations that the young person has to go to the nurse to do their injection, therefore missing out on time with peers.

This section, and the following section on family and friends, also highlights the irritating ignorance of some people regarding diabetes and its management, and how correcting

this, and other attitudes, can take its emotional toil. Dr Besser also describes the burden of others' worries, including those of parents, and how this can affect relationships within a family.

There is a whole chapter dedicated to the teenage years and life beyond home. These chapters, through personal narratives, give the reader insight into the diabetes journey undertaken by the young person – from being a dependent child with diabetes to an independent young adult.

The final chapter of the book looks at the best and the worst times living with diabetes. Children and young people with the condition are asked to provide answers to a series of questions, which are then contrasted with the answers provided by parents to the same questions. Its function of highlighting differences in priorities and worries that parents and children have should provide food for thought for all.

I commend Dr Besser for her well-written, insightful book, which I would have no hesitation in recommending to all families who have children with diabetes. I would also like to see it as compulsory reading for all healthcare professionals who provide their care, as it demonstrates our impact on their acceptance of this lifelong condition. ■

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