

ABSTRACT

The influence of family support on compliance
in the management of diabetes

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Diabetes mellitus is one of the leading causes of death and disability among adults, affecting approximately 12% of the adult population 35 years and over. Effective metabolic control through the use of pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatment is essential to ameliorate and/or avoid or delay acute and long term complications.

This cross-sectional study was conducted to determine influence of family support on compliance, observing whether there was any variation with certain demographic variables.

Information was obtained from a purposive sample of seventy diabetics attending weekly diabetic clinics at the Community Health centre of the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine and the University Hospital of the West Indies.

The survey instrument used was a questionnaire and data was collected from a single interview.

Patients were found to be more compliant with medication than with diet or exercise, recording lower levels of family support with exercise than with encouragement to take medication or to observe dietary restrictions.

All patients reported some level of family support. No patient with a low score for family support recorded a high level of compliance. No significant statistical association was found between levels of family support and age, sex, income and education, or between family support and compliance. However, there was found to be a significant association between compliance and the state of glycaemic control of patients, indicating that patient compliance is a most important factor in the management of the disease.

Indications are that family support is an important factor in influencing compliance, however, individual influences such as the patient's attitude, judgement and experience are critical factors which influence compliance.