

The PSAD Study Group applauds landmark EASD clinical guideline on diabetes distress

The PsychoSocial Aspects of Diabetes (PSAD) Study Group welcomes the groundbreaking clinical guideline from the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD), which addresses a critical gap in diabetes care: the assessment and management of diabetes distress.

This historic guideline – which is also the EASD’s first ever evidence-based clinical guideline – will be presented at the EASD’s 61st annual meeting. It is the first in the world to provide evidence-based recommendations on how to assess and manage diabetes distress. It represents a pivotal advancement in recognising the emotional side of diabetes in routine clinical care.

“This guideline validates what our Study Group has long advocated - that the emotional and psychological aspects of diabetes are not secondary concerns, but fundamental components of comprehensive diabetes care,” said Professor Jane Speight, Chair of the PSAD Study Group and Co-Chair of the EASD’s Guideline Development Panel. *“The EASD’s decision to make diabetes distress the focus of their inaugural clinical guideline sends a powerful message about the importance of psychosocial health in diabetes management.”*

The PSAD Study Group particularly commends the inclusive development process that involved people with lived experience of diabetes as active panel members throughout guideline creation, in addition to experts in clinical psychology, health psychology, nursing, medicine and research methodology. This approach aligns with PSAD’s core principles of ensuring that clinical recommendations reflect the real-world experiences and needs of individuals living with diabetes.

What is diabetes distress?

Diabetes distress is the emotional and psychological burden of living with and managing diabetes. It can include negative feelings such as frustration, worries, sadness, anger specifically about diabetes, including low and high glucose levels, glucose monitoring, medication taking, interactions with others and worries about complications, and much more. Around one in three people with diabetes experience elevated diabetes distress, and up to four in five experience some aspect of living with diabetes as a moderate or severe problem. This new guideline shows that healthcare professionals can identify and address diabetes distress to support adults living with type 1 or type 2 diabetes.

Key aspects of the guideline that resonate with PSAD’s mission

Routine Assessment: The guideline’s emphasis on incorporating diabetes distress assessment into regular clinical practice represents a significant step towards normalising psychological care in diabetes clinics. The recommended use of techniques such as open-ended questions and validated assessment tools reflects evidence-based approaches that PSAD members have long championed.

Evidence-Based Management Strategies: The guideline’s support for psychological and psychoeducational interventions provides healthcare professionals with the confidence that practical referral pathways can be used to support people experiencing diabetes distress. The guideline recognises that the evidence differs by intervention and type of diabetes, and shows that various interventions may be useful – from peer support to technologies to psychological therapies – depending on the nature and extent of the distress experienced.

Person-Centred Care: The guideline’s emphasis on collaborative care planning and tailored follow-up support aligns with PSAD’s advocacy for individualised approaches that respect the unique circumstances and preferences of each person with diabetes.

Comments from the Guideline Development Panel and the PSAD Study Group

Professor Richard Holt, Co-Chair of the EASD's Guideline Development Panel and Co-Chair of the EASD Guideline Oversight Committee, emphasised the significance of this development: *"Having diabetes distress as the focus of EASD's first clinical guideline demonstrates our commitment to supporting the whole person, not just improving their glucose levels. This represents a fundamental shift in how we approach diabetes care, recognising that emotional health is inseparable from physical health."*

The guideline development process benefited significantly from the perspectives of people living with diabetes, ensuring that recommendations address real-world challenges and priorities.

Walther Jensen, a person living with type 2 diabetes who was a member of the Guideline Development Panel, shared: *"For too long, the emotional burden of managing diabetes has been overlooked in clinical settings. This guideline gives healthcare professionals the tools and permission to address something that affects every person with diabetes - the daily psychological challenges of living with this condition. It's validating to see our experiences finally recognised as an essential part of care."*

Michelle Law, a person living with type 1 diabetes who also participated in the Guideline Development Panel, added: *"The constant demands of living with diabetes can be overwhelming, and it's crucial that healthcare professionals understand and address this reality. This guideline represents hope that future appointments will include meaningful conversations about the emotional aspects of diabetes, not just numbers and insulin adjustments."*

The PSAD Study Group recognises that successful implementation will require sustained effort across multiple levels of healthcare systems. The organisation will support dissemination efforts through its educational initiatives, research collaborations, and professional development programs.

"While this guideline marks tremendous progress, it also highlights the work still needed to ensure all people with diabetes have access to comprehensive psychosocial support," added Professor Speight. *"We look forward to collaborating with EASD and other organisations to translate these recommendations into improved care experiences and outcomes for people living with diabetes worldwide."*

Next Steps

The PSAD Study Group encourages healthcare professionals, researchers, and diabetes organisations to actively engage with the guideline during its **open consultation period**, which runs **until Friday 31 October 2025**.

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

About the PsychoSocial Aspects of Diabetes (PSAD) Study Group

The international PSAD Study Group was established in 1995. It is an official reference group to the EASD on all matters relating to the psychological, social and behavioural aspects of diabetes. The PSAD Study Group has 150+ members in 30+ countries on 5 continents. It holds annual scientific meetings and events throughout the year designed to advance research, education, and clinical practice in the psychological, social and behavioural dimensions of diabetes care. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, the PSAD Study Group works to improve the health, emotional well-being and quality of life of people living with diabetes worldwide. The next annual meeting of the PSAD Study Group will be held on 17-19 February 2026 in Geelong, Victoria, Australia – the first in the Group's history to be held outside Europe.

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