

A little TLC goes a long way in diabetes management

If you have type 2 diabetes, you are no doubt aware of the daily challenges in managing it well – remembering to take your medications or injections, making the right food choices, allocating time for regular exercise and blood glucose monitoring. To provide frequent and easily accessible support for those managing their diabetes, researchers from universities in Brisbane and the USA have developed the Telephone-Linked Care (TLC) diabetes program – a world-first interactive telephone system available around the clock from the comfort of your own home. Professor Brian Oldenburg of Monash University in Victoria is the Chief Investigator of the TLC diabetes project.

Users phone the system weekly to receive encouragement and feedback on their blood glucose results, healthy eating, medication taking, or activity level. The TLC system interviews and converses with callers via pre-recorded statements and questions. It is equipped with sophisticated software that tailors its responses based on answers provided by the person at the end of the line, in both previous and current conversations.

For example, the telephone system asks users to set physical activity goals for the coming week. The next week it asks how many times and how many minutes each time the person exercised in the past seven days. The TLC diabetes program then compares the person's achievements against their goal. It is then able to congratulate the person if the goal is achieved or help users overcome barriers to physical activity, if they could not achieve their goal.

The TLC diabetes program is designed to complement the care already provided by health care professionals.

This world-first support system for type 2 diabetes self-care is being trialed in Queensland. The first phase of the project is currently taking place in Brisbane with almost 100 participants. Soon to commence is the exciting regional phase in which residents of rural and remote parts of Queensland will be asked to participate. Registrations of interest are welcome now.

To find out more, please contact the TLC diabetes team on 3636 5506 or at TLCdiabetes@coh.uq.edu.au or visit the TLC diabetes project website at www.tlcdiabetes.monash.org.au.



Michael Burke, aged 66, is so glad he picked up a TLC brochure nearly six months ago. Now he picks up the phone every week for his regular dose of TLC. Michael believes the program has changed his life because he now knows what to do to live well with type 2 diabetes.

“The weekly feedback received during the calls to the TLC diabetes system motivated me to make sure I walked daily and to work out how food affects my blood glucose. I have now lost weight and most of my blood glucose results are in the recommended range. Importantly, I feel much more positive about looking after my health.”

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