



CASE: DIABETES

Group guidance and peer support prevent diabetes

The health care costs of people with diabetes amounted to 1.3 billion euros in 2007. More than 800 million euros of these costs were additional costs caused by diabetes. In addition to this, the diabetes-related productivity costs amounted to 1.3 billion euros due to disability pensions, sick leaves, and premature deaths.

The Good Ageing in Lahti Region (GOAL, Ikihyvä) project developed a group meeting system for cost-effective and efficient prevention of diabetes in primary health care.

In this system, health care centre nurses arrange group appointments for people who are at risk of developing diabetes. The purpose of these appointments is to reduce fat intake, lose weight, and increase fibre intake and exercise. The participants also receive support from nutritionists and municipal sports services.

Impaired glucose tolerance indicates that the person is at great risk of developing type 2 diabetes. In a study conducted as a part of the GOAL project, almost one in two of those patients with impaired glucose tolerance were able to get their glucose tolerance back to normal after lifestyle guidance. Group meetings take up less of the health care centre employees' time than individual appointments. Well-organised group guidance offers valuable peer support and motivation to participants.



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The One Life health project strives towards a healthier Finland. The Finnish Brain Association, the Finnish Diabetes Association, the Finnish Lung Health Association, the Organisation for Respiratory Health, the Finnish Association for Mental Health, the Finnish Heart Association, and the Cancer Society of Finland have teamed up to promote people's health and welfare throughout their lives. Duodecim participates in the project as an expert organisation.

Costs

A two-hour group appointment with a nurse costs the municipality around 20 euros per patient. If a group of 10 participants had 6 meetings, the total cost would be 1,200 euros.

Savings

Preventing one person from developing type 2 diabetes would save over 1,000 euros per year in health care costs. Preventing one person from developing type 2 diabetes with related complications would save almost 6,000 euros per year.

Please note:

This analysis is based on lifestyle interventions, not on clinical, controlled trials.

Pictures of food portions were not used to report portion sizes, which could have led people to under-report their portion sizes and calories.

The inclusion of sports in the programme might have depended too heavily on individual nurses or employees of sports services. Women were more active to participate in the lifestyle guidance sessions, but their results were poorer.

Sources:

- Diabeteksen kustannukset Suomessa 1998-2007 [Diabetes-related costs in Finland in 1998–2007], DEHKO and Finnish Diabetes Association 2010.
- Elintapainventiolla saavutettiin osa diabeteksen ehkäisy tutkimuksen tuloksista [Lifestyle intervention accounted for a part of the results of a diabetes prevention study]. Lääkärilehti Finnish Medical Journal, 22/2008.
- Interview with university lecturer and nutritionist Raisa Valve 06/06/2016.



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