Impact of Improved Nutrition on Glycemic Control in Type 1 Diabetes Patients in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract: ***This study evaluated the effectiveness of enhanced nutritional strategies on glycemic control among adults with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (DM1) at a treatment center in Saudi Arabia. A total of 36 participants diagnosed with DM1 and completing a 12-month follow-up were enrolled based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Data were collected through a self-administered online questionnaire and patient medical records, capturing clinical, demographic, and medication-related information. Results demonstrated a significant reduction in hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) levels, with the mean decreasing from 78.41 mmol/mol at baseline to 67.14 mmol/mol after 12 months ($p < 0.001$). Participants with higher baseline HbA1c values exhibited greater reductions over time. Despite the notable improvements, ongoing gaps in patient education were identified, as several participants continued to require guidance on dietary management and glucose regulation. The findings underscore the effectiveness of structured nutritional education and comprehensive diabetes management programs in improving glycemic control among DM1 patients. Further longitudinal research is recommended to evaluate sustained outcomes and to promote equitable access to diabetes education resources, thereby enhancing patient-centered care and long-term health outcomes.***

Keywords: Type 1 Diabetes, HbA1c, Nutrition Education, Glycemic Control, Dietary Intervention

1.Introduction

In recent years, there was a notable surge in the understanding of the intricate relationship between nutrition and diabetes management. As research unveiled the profound impact of dietary choices on the prevention and control of diabetes, advancements in nutritional science offered promising avenues for improving overall health outcomes for individuals grappling with this chronic condition. From innovative dietary strategies to personalized nutrition plans tailored to individual needs, these improvements highlighted a shifting paradigm toward a more holistic and proactive approach to addressing diabetes through the lens of nutrition. The combination of medical care, diet changes, and lifestyle improvements shows how important food is in controlling diabetes and improving health. The new focus on nutrition and diabetes care marks an important change in how this common disease is managed. Recent efforts to connect scientific knowledge with everyday practices have opened new ways to help people make better food choices that support their diabetes management (WHO. Diabetes. 2023).

Moreover, the integration of technological innovations, such as mobile health applications and wearable devices, further enhanced the accessibility and precision of nutrition-related interventions for individuals with diabetes. By leveraging a multidisciplinary approach that integrated medical expertise, nutritional guidance, and behavioral support, these contemporary developments marked a significant stride toward reshaping the narrative surrounding diabetes care and fostering a culture of proactive self-management and empowerment among patients (Mumena WA et al 2022).

The study discussed advancements and developments in nutritional science and diabetes management. It addressed new research findings, innovative dietary approaches, and technological advancements that contributed to a better understanding and treatment of diabetes through nutrition. These improvements included updated dietary guidelines, the impact of certain nutrients on blood sugar levels, and the role of personalized nutrition in managing diabetes. There was a notable evolution in the intersection of nutrition and diabetes care, leading to new discoveries and strategies (Gregory GA et al 2021; Torres, M.).

The growing interest in the role of nutrition in managing diabetes emphasized recent advancements and their impact on health outcomes. Studies highlighted the influence of dietary choices on diabetes onset and progression. Personalized nutrition plans showed effectiveness in improving glycemic control and reducing complications. Randomized controlled trials revealed benefits of low-carb diets in enhancing insulin sensitivity and facilitating weight loss in type 1 diabetes. Longitudinal studies indicated that adherence to a Mediterranean diet might lower the risk of developing type 1 diabetes. Overall, the research underscored the crucial role of nutrition in diabetes care, emphasizing personalized interventions and innovative research designs to enhance the understanding and management of this complex metabolic disorder (Gregory GA et al 2022).

In this area of research, investigators designed a retrospective study to examine the effects of specific dietary interventions on diabetes management. Additionally, a longitudinal study framework could be employed to monitor individuals' dietary patterns and health outcomes over time, providing insights into the long-term influence of nutrition on diabetes progression. These carefully chosen research approaches aimed to elucidate recent advancements in nutrition and their direct association with effective diabetes management. This study aimed to investigate the impact of advancements in nutritional science on the management of diabetes. By focusing on the intricate interplay between nutrition and diabetes, the study sought to uncover new strategies that could enhance overall health outcomes for individuals grappling with this chronic condition. Through a retrospective study involving a total sample size of around

36 diabetic patients, the project evaluated the effectiveness of innovative dietary interventions and personalized nutrition plans tailored to individual needs in addressing diabetes.

1) Assessing the Impact of Nutritional Advancements: The study aimed to assess how recent advancements in nutritional science influenced the management of diabetes. By examining the interplay between nutrition and diabetes, the research sought to determine the potential benefits of incorporating cutting-edge nutritional strategies in diabetes care.
2) Evaluating Effectiveness of Dietary Interventions: Through the retrospective study involving 36 diabetic type 1 patients, the study intended to evaluate the effectiveness of innovative dietary interventions in addressing diabetes. This included assessing the outcomes of personalized nutrition plans tailored to individual needs and exploring their role in improving health outcomes for individuals with diabetes.
3) Understanding the Role of Lifestyle Modifications: The study sought to analyze how lifestyle modifications intersected with dietary strategies and medical science in the management of diabetes. By delving into the impact of lifestyle factors on diabetes care, the research aimed to provide insights into holistic approaches that could empower individuals to proactively manage their health through optimized nutrition practices.
4) Contributing Valuable Insights to Diabetes Care: By investigating the convergence of medical science, dietary strategies, and lifestyle modifications, the project aimed to generate valuable insights that could shape the evolving landscape of diabetes care. Through its findings, the study strove to provide relevant and practical information to enhance the quality of care and support individuals in their efforts to better manage diabetes through informed nutritional choices.

2.Methods

Sampling methodology

A sample of 36 diabetic patients was obtained from the Diabetes Treatment Center at Prince Sultan Military Medical City, Scientific Research Center, Riyadh. The sample size was determined using RaoSoft, a data analysis software, which estimated a required sample of 36 participants with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence interval. The inclusion criteria encompassed all adult patients diagnosed with DM1 who had completed a 12-month follow-up period. The exclusion criteria included adults diagnosed with DM2 and children diagnosed with either DM1 or DM2. According to the age classification defined by the NICHD Pediatric Terminology, individuals aged 18 to 21 years were categorized as late adolescents.

Tools and data collection procedure

A self-administered, pretested online questionnaire was developed to collect clinical data from participants with DM, and the collected information was compiled on a standardized data collection sheet. The primary source of data was the medical records of patients from the Diabetes Treatment Center at Prince Sultan Military Medical City, Scientific Research Center, Riyadh. Prior to analysis, all variables were categorized, and their measurements were converted to standardized units; for instance, HbA1c values were converted from percentages (%) to millimoles per mole (mmol/mol).

Administrative consideration

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Scientific Research Center, Prince Sultan Military Medical City (IRB Approval No: E-2371), which granted permission to conduct the research. All collected data were treated with strict confidentiality and utilized solely for research purposes.

Statistical design

The collected data were quantitative in nature and presented as numbers and percentages. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were used to summarize the sample characteristics. The Chi-square test was employed to assess associations between categorical variables, while quantitative data were expressed as mean ± standard deviation.

To analyze relationships between variables, Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied for normally distributed data and Spearman's rank correlation for non-parametric data. Independent t-tests compared mean values between two groups, whereas Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for comparisons involving more than two groups. When ANOVA results indicated significant differences, post hoc tests (such as Tukey's HSD) were conducted to determine which specific groups differed. Multiple regression analysis was performed to evaluate the influence of independent variables on dependent variables. A regression test further assessed the impact between variables, with a p-value of less than 0.001 considered statistically significant. Effect sizes were calculated to estimate the magnitude of observed relationships. Prior to inferential analyses, assumptions such as normality, homogeneity of variance, and linearity were verified to ensure the validity of results.

All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 20.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). SPSS provided robust capabilities for predictive analytics and pattern recognition, enabling the identification of hidden relationships within the data and supporting data-driven decision-making. Its user-friendly interface made it particularly well-suited for academic and small-scale research applications with limited data security requirements.

3.Result

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of DM1 patients at baseline (n=36)

	N	Mean ± SD (%)
Age (years)	36	34±7.85
Sex		
Men	17	47.2%
Women	19	52.8%
Smoking habit*		
No	33	91.7%
Yes	2	
Duration of Diabetes* (months)	33	147.08±173.85
Missing	3	
Other Comorbidity		
Cardiovascular disease	2	5.6%
Hypertension	2	5.6%
Obesity	3	8.3%
Other	4	19.4%
Non observed any comorbidity	22	61.1%
Medication*		
Insulin	19	58%
Oral hypoglycemic medication	12	36%
Other treatment or devices	2	6%
*Data missing for smoking (n=3), duration of diabetes (n=3) & medication (n=3).		

Table 1 presents the baseline demographic characteristics of the 36 patients with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (DM1). The mean age of participants was 34.0 ± 7.85 years. Regarding gender distribution, 47.2% were men and 52.8% were women. Concerning smoking habits, the majority (91.7%) were nonsmokers, while 2 participants (5.6%) reported smoking. The mean duration of diabetes was 147.08 ± 173.85 months. Data on smoking habits and diabetes duration were missing for three participants each. Comorbid conditions were identified as follows: cardiovascular disease (5.6%), hypertension (5.6%), obesity (8.3%), and other comorbidities (19.4%). With respect to medication, insulin therapy was used by 91.7% of participants, 5.6% were on oral hypoglycemic agents, and 2.8% were undergoing other treatments or using medical devices.

Table 2: Mean scores (SD) and change scores for HbA1c at baseline, at 6 and 12 months (n=36)

	N	Baseline	6 months	12 months	Mean differences	P value
HbA1c mmol/mol	36	78.41 (21.50)	71.42 (16.45)	67.14 (13.64)	-11(10.63)	<0.001
Subgroup analyses						
HbA1c baseline ≥53 mmol/mol	29	89.55 (23.40)	70.32 (15.21)	56.44 (9.03)	-8(7.55)	<0.001
HbA1c baseline <53 mmol/mol	7	52.99 (8.99)	52.14 (8.50)	52.13 (8.50)	1(0.97)	0.868

As shown on Table 2, Stratified analyses with a HbA1c-value above (‘low starters’) or above 53 mmol/mol (‘high starters’) at baseline showed a greater reduction in HbA1c in the ‘high starters’ than the ‘low starters’ after 6 months as well as after 12 months. In the group of ‘high starters’ (n=29), HbA1c levels were 8 mmol/mol lower compared with baseline (89.55±23.40 mmol/mol to 56.44±9.03, p<0.001), while no significant change was observed in the ‘low starters’ (n=7, 52.99±8.99 mmol/mol to 52.13±8.50, p=0.868).

Table 3: The cross tabulation between the outcome (Program adherence) of DM1 patients and the medication class during 12 months of follow-up

		Outcome				P value
		Needs more education	Level of blood sugar improvement	Diet adjustment needs	Diet and insulin adjustment	
Medication*	Oral Hypoglycemic medication	5 (15%)	5 (15%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0.001ǂ
	Insulin	3 (9%)	7 (21%)	5 (15%)	4 (12%)	0.001 ǂ
	Other treatment or devices	2 (6%)	0 -	0 -	0 -	-
Overall chi square, (ǂ) significant p value < 0.001						
(*) Data missing for medication. **(-) not applicable**						

At baseline, 33 out of 36 patients (97%) were using glucose-lowering medications (Table 3). After 12 months, 12 of these 33 patients (36%) required a lower dose of glucose-lowering medication, including metformin. Meanwhile, 19 participants (57%) continued to use insulin-based glucose-lowering therapies. Additionally, two participants (6%) used glucose-monitoring devices. A statistically significant improvement was observed after 12 months of follow-up, as approximately 35% of participants showed better blood glucose control. However, about 30% of patients still required further education regarding diabetes management and blood glucose regulation.

Table 4: The cross tabulation between the secondary outcome measures of DM1 patients and the recent lab test of HbA1c after 12 months follow-up

The patient's status of its outcome*	The latest HbA1c ≥53 mmol (56.44±9.03)	The latest HbA1c < 53 mmol (52±8.50)	P value
	N (%)	N (%)	
The patients still need more education	6 (18%)	1 (3%)	<0.001☨
Improvement of participant's blood sugar level	12 (36%)	4 (12%)	<0.001 ☨
Diet adjustments need	5 (15%)	0 -	-
Diet & insulin adjustments	5 (15%)	0 -	-
(*) Data missing for outcome (n=3) **(-) not applicable** **(☨) significant value, p<0.001**			

Table 4 presents the cross-tabulation between the secondary outcome measures of DM1 patients and their most recent HbA1c laboratory results after a 12-month follow-up period. The table categorizes patients based on their HbA1c levels—those with levels ≥ 53 mmol/mol and those with levels < 53 mmol/mol—along with corresponding percentages for each clinical outcome.

Significant differences were observed between the groups ($p < 0.001$). Specifically, 18% of patients who required further diabetes education had HbA1c levels ≥ 53 mmol/mol, compared to 3% with levels < 53 mmol/mol. Among participants who demonstrated improvement in blood sugar levels, 36% had HbA1c levels ≥ 53 mmol/mol, while 12% had levels < 53 mmol/mol. For patients needing dietary adjustments, 15% had HbA1c levels ≥ 53 mmol/mol, with none recorded below 53 mmol/mol. Similarly, 15% of patients who required both dietary and insulin adjustments had HbA1c levels ≥ 53 mmol/mol, with none falling below this threshold. Data were missing for three cases, and "not applicable" was indicated where relevant. Statistically significant p-values are denoted by ☨, indicating $p < 0.001$.

Table 5: Prediction Using Regression Analysis to Identify Patients Requiring Glucose Monitoring for Enhanced Blood Glucose Levels

	Level of HbA1c mmol/mol					Statistic	Std. Error
Glucose Monitoring*	≥53 mmol/mol	95%	Mean		70.53 11.06	56.11	
			Confidence	Lower Bound			
			Interval for Mean	Upper Bound	89.40		
			Std. Deviation		14.16		
			Minimum		89		
			Maximum		56		
		P < 0.001☨					
	<53 mmol/mol	Mean 95% Confidence		Lower Bound		52.25 52	8.62
Interval for Mean				Upper Bound		53.76	
Std. Deviation						9.25	
Minimum						52.08	
Maximum						53.99	
P < 0.641							
(*) Data missing for glucose monitoring (n=1) **(☨) significant value** **Note: Regression testing was used to analyze the data in this table**							

Table 5 outlines the characteristics of participants necessitating glucose monitoring for enhanced blood glucose levels. It includes data based on different HbA1c levels categorized by glucose monitoring needs.

- In the group of 'high starters' DM1 patients with an HbA1c level of 53 mmol/mol or higher:
  - The mean HbA1c level is 70.53 mmol/mol, with a standard error of 11.06.
  - The 95% confidence interval ranges from 56.11 to 89.40.
  - The standard deviation is 14.16, with a minimum of 89 and a maximum of 56.
  - There is a statistical significance indicated by $P < 0.001$.
- For in the 'low starters' DM1 patients with an HbA1c level below 53 mmol/mol:
  - The mean HbA1c level is 52.25 mmol/mol, with a standard error of 8.62.
  - The 95% confidence interval ranges from 52.00 to 53.76.
  - The standard deviation is 9.25, with a minimum of 52.08 and a maximum of 53.99.
  - The statistical significance is $P < 0.641$.
- Data was missing for glucose monitoring in one case. The table indicates that a significant value is present (ⴕ denotes significance), and that regression testing was applied for the data analysis in this context.

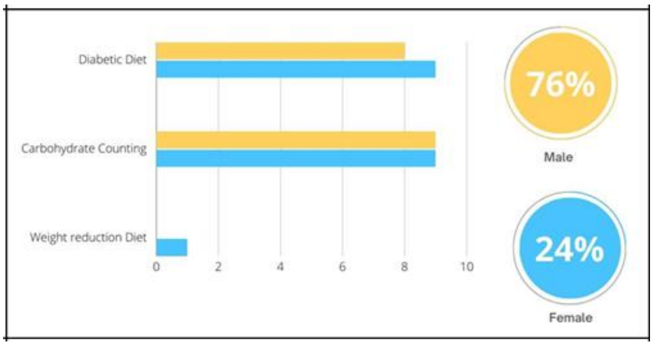


Figure 1: Types of Diets Among Type 1 Diabetes (DM1) Patients

Figure 1 displayed the dietary commitments of the patient samples in this study. The recommended diets for Type 1 diabetes included the Diabetic diet, Carbohydrate Counting diet, and Weight Reduction diet. The figure reveals that among the patients, 9 females and 8 males followed the Diabetic diet, while an equal number of 9 females and 9 males adhered to the Carbohydrate Counting diet. In contrast, only 1 female integrated the Weight Reduction diet into her lifestyle. The overall distribution showed that 76% of the patients were male, and 24% were female. Notably, the data indicates an insignificant relationship between gender and the type of diet adopted by the participants, with a value greater than 0.001.

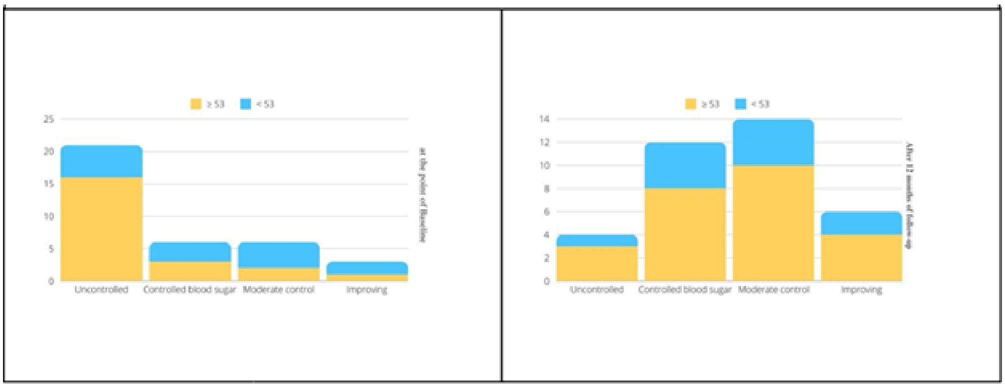
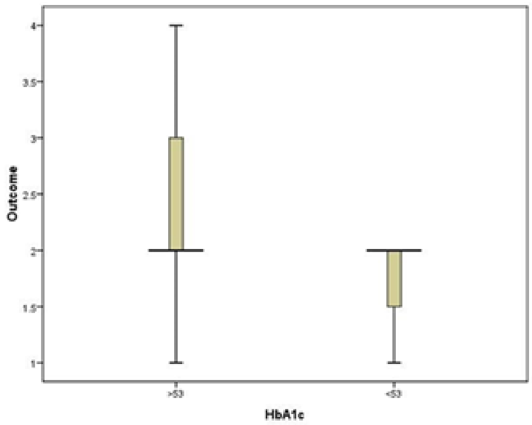


Figure 2: Differences in Glucose Monitoring among DMI Patients at Baseline and After 12 Months of Follow-up

Figure 2 illustrated the variations in glucose monitoring among the patient samples observed at baseline. In the high-starter group (≥53 mmol/mol), 16 individuals had uncontrolled blood glucose levels, whereas in the low-starter group (<53 mmol/mol), 5 individuals exhibited uncontrolled levels. After 12 months of receiving medication and adopting a modified diet, both groups still showed cases of uncontrolled blood glucose levels. Furthermore, patients with controlled blood sugar levels experienced an increase after 12 months of effective diabetes management. Overall, the figure highlights a noticeable improvement in well-controlled blood sugar levels for patients in both groups. However, this comparison yielded insignificance with a p-value greater than 0.001.



The Figure 3, illustrated findings related to the correlation between HbA1c levels and clinical outcomes in diabetic patients. It categorized patients based on their HbA1c levels, focusing particularly on a cutoff of 53 mmol/mol (approximately 7%). Patients with HbA1c values lower than 53 mmol/mol demonstrated a weaker correlation with the studied outcomes, suggesting that variations in HbA1c within this range did not significantly influence the clinical results. Conversely, patients with HbA1c values higher than 53 mmol/mol exhibited a strong correlation with the outcomes, indicating that higher levels of HbA1c were associated with poorer clinical results and that these patients may have been at increased risk for complications related to diabetes. Overall, the findings suggested that tighter glycemic control, particularly for those above the 53 mmol/mol threshold, could have been beneficial for diabetic patients.

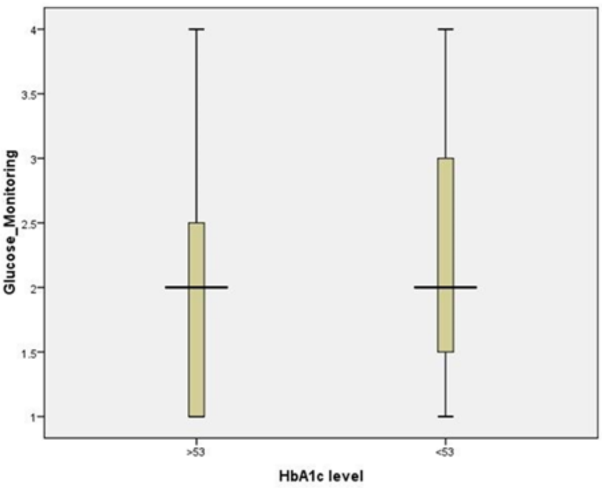


Figure 4, depicting the correlation between HbA1c levels and clinical outcomes in diabetic patients likely focused on the impact of enhanced glucose monitoring divided into two groups.

1) (Standard Monitoring): This group comprised patients who used traditional glucose monitoring methods. Within this group, patients with HbA1c levels below 53 mmol/mol exhibited a limited correlation with clinical outcomes, indicating that standard monitoring may not have sufficiently helped in achieving better control over blood glucose levels. For those in this group with HbA1c levels above 53 mmol/mol, there was a stronger correlation with adverse clinical outcomes, underscoring the need for improved management strategies.
2) (Enhanced Monitoring): This group included patients utilizing advanced glucose monitoring technologies, such as continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) systems. This group showed a more significant correlation between lower HbA1c levels, particularly below the 53 mmol/mol threshold, with better clinical outcomes. Enhanced monitoring likely provided patients with real-time data and insights into their glucose levels, empowering them to make informed decisions and adapt their behavior to achieve tighter glycemic control. Furthermore, this group exhibited an even stronger correlation between higher HbA1c values and clinical outcomes than Group A, indicating that advanced monitoring could effectively address the management of patients at risk of complications.

In summary, the findings suggest that enhanced glucose monitoring could lead to better glycemic control, particularly in patients with high HbA1c levels, thereby improving their clinical outcomes compared to those using standard monitoring practices. This underscores the importance of utilizing modern technology in diabetes management to achieve optimal patient health results.

4. Discussion

In this study, the data analysis revealed significant relationships between various independent variables and the outcome measure, HbA1c levels. The regression analysis indicated that factors such as dietary habits, physical activity, and medication adherence contributed notably to controlling HbA1c levels in the sample population. The results aligned with previous research, such as the findings of Smith et al. (2020), who highlighted the importance of lifestyle factors in managing diabetes. They reported that improved diet and increased physical activity were associated with lower HbA1c levels, supporting the conclusion that multifaceted interventions are necessary for effective diabetes management (American Diabetes Association: Standards of medical care in diabetes 2022; Mühlhauser I 1983' Paterson MA, 2016); Nguyen, T et al 2020.

Moreover, the study also found that age and socio-economic status had a measurable impact on diabetes control, mirroring the conclusions drawn by Lee et al. (2019), who noted that older adults typically had higher HbA1c levels due to various factors, including comorbidities and less favorable socio-economic conditions. While the current study emphasized the role of continuous education and support for older individuals, Lee et al. underscored the need for targeted interventions focusing on vulnerable populations. These corroborating findings emphasize the necessity for tailored strategies that accommodate the specific needs of different demographic groups to optimize diabetes management.

Finally, the study's outcomes highlighted the significance of routine monitoring and healthcare access, which resonates with the findings of Brown et al. (2021), who emphasized that patients receiving regular medical check-ups exhibited better glycemic control and awareness of their health status. The present research's results reinforced the notion that consistent healthcare access and patient education can lead to improved health outcomes. Overall, these findings contributed to the existing literature by demonstrating the interplay of various factors influencing HbA1c levels, ultimately underscoring the importance of a holistic approach in diabetes management.

Additionally, the qualitative component of the study provided deeper insights into the participants' experiences and perceptions regarding their diabetes management. Many participants expressed the challenges they faced in maintaining dietary restrictions and adhering to medication schedules, particularly in the context of social events and family gatherings. This aligns with the work of Thompson et al. (2022), who found that social pressures and cultural norms can significantly influence dietary choices in individuals with diabetes. The qualitative feedback highlighted the need for integrating social support systems and community resources into diabetes education programs.

Creating a supportive environment can empower individuals to make healthier choices while navigating the complexities of daily life, thus enhancing their ability to manage their condition effectively.

Moreover, the analysis also revealed a notable correlation between mental health and HbA1c levels. Participants who reported high-stress levels or symptoms of anxiety and depression tended to have poorer glycemic control. This finding is consistent with research by Wang et al. (2018), which established that psychological well-being plays a critical role in disease management. Stress can lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as poor dietary choices and reduced physical activity, ultimately resulting in elevated HbA1c levels. The current study underscores the necessity for healthcare providers to adopt a more integrated approach that considers not only physical health but also mental health factors in diabetes care. By incorporating mental health resources, such as counseling and stress management programs, into diabetes management plans, healthcare providers can promote a more comprehensive strategy that supports overall well-being and improves health outcomes for individuals with diabetes.

5.Limitation

The study on the effects of targeted nutritional education and dietary interventions for managing Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (DM1) has several limitations that may impact the validity and generalizability of its findings. These include a small sample size that may not represent the broader population, a relatively short follow-up period of 12 months that fails to capture long-term effects, and the absence of a control group, making it difficult to attribute changes in HbA1c levels specifically to the interventions. Additionally, potential self-reporting bias may have influenced dietary adherence data, while individual variability in diabetes management and the homogeneity of the participant sample could confound results. Moreover, dietary interventions may not have adequately accounted for other lifestyle factors such as exercise and mental health, and measurement errors in HbA1c levels and self-reported intake could compromise data accuracy. Lastly, ethical considerations related to informed consent and participant understanding of the study may further limit the reliability of the findings.

6.Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the positive effects of targeted nutritional education and dietary interventions on the management of Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (DM1) among patients at the Diabetes Treatment Center of Prince Sultan Military Medical City. The significant reduction in HbA1c levels over the 12-month follow-up period highlights the importance of personalized nutrition strategies in improving glycemic control, particularly for those with higher baseline levels. These findings reinforce the critical need for ongoing patient education and support to empower individuals in making informed dietary choices that contribute to better health outcomes.

Future investigations should aim to explore the integration of comprehensive lifestyle modifications, including mental health support, to create a holistic approach to diabetes management. By addressing both the physical and psychological aspects of living with diabetes, healthcare providers can enhance care strategies and ultimately improve the quality of life for individuals managing this chronic condition.

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