

The disease management programme for type 2 diabetes in Austria

In 2004 the Austrian social security started to develop a concept for a disease management programme (DMP) for patients with diabetes mellitus type 2. The reason was a number of structural problems in the care for diabetic patients, such as: inhomogeneity in the treatment provided, cost of redundant medical tests, lack of interface management and shortage of specialized structures (e.g. out-patient units for diabetic feet) leading to poor treatment results. The implementation of the DMP “Therapie Aktiv – Diabetes im Griff” started in 2007.

„Therapie Aktiv“ is a systematic treatment programme with the objective to organize long term and high-quality medical care for diabetic patients.

The programme is based on the cooperation with general practitioners and specialists in internal medicine in their own practices. Participation is optional and free of charge, for both doctors and patients. After a basic training doctors can work as “DMP-physicians”. They are guided by scientifically-reviewed up-to-date pathways and take care of the patients’ long-term treatment as well as the recommended medical examinations, e. g. annual checks of HbA1c, eyes, and feet.

The programme aims to prevent long term diabetes complications and to assure the patient’s quality of life through:

- prevention and health promotion
- structured diagnosis and medical treatment at a high quality level
- consideration of the overall cardiovascular patient risk and
- stronger involvement / participation of patients in the treatment process

Patients can enrol in the programme, if the diagnosis of type 2 diabetes mellitus is established. They should be able to participate actively in their treatment, and they have to sign a consent of participation. After inscription patients attend a training course on diabetes type 2, where they learn how to handle their disease. They also obtain a “patient’s booklet” which deals with topics such as healthy lifestyle (nutrition, exercise, etc), blood sugar management, diabetes medication, and preventable long term complications. Training course and guidance are supposed to help patients manage daily life with diabetes type 2 and the most common accompanying diseases, like hypertension or lipid disorders.

Patient empowerment is an important component of the programme and patients sign contracts with their physicians regarding treatment targets, e.g. the loss of 3 kg of weight within the next two months.

The programme also assures that the necessary medical examinations are provided on a regular basis.

The advantages for the DMP-physician are:

- Scientifically-reviewed up-to-date guidelines and treatment pathways provide diagnostic and therapeutic safety
- Active patients are more motivated to continue therapy
- Long-term regular care instead of occasional visits at the incidence of health problems
- Optimization of individual treatment strategies through regular review of the treatment results
- Coordination of the information flow with focus on the attending physician
- The DMP-physicians are rewarded for their additional administrative work

Goals of “Therapie Aktiv”

The primary goal of „Therapie Aktiv“ is to improve the quality of life for patients with diabetes type 2 and to extend their life time in good health.

With nationwide participation the following objectives should be achieved:

- reduction of the increased risk of morbidity and mortality
- avoidance or postponement of micro-and macrovascular complications (visual impairment / blindness, renal failure, cardiovascular disease, amputation, etc.)
- avoidance of therapy side effects and severe metabolic derailments

Summary

- The DMP „Therapie Aktiv“ improves patient care
- The programme focuses on the patient
- The DMP-physician becomes the family doctor and long-term “attendant/ companion” for the patient
- Reduction of long-term diabetes complications (myocardial infarction, amputations, renal impairment to dialysis, blindness, etc.)
- Efficient use of health care resources (savings in the in-patient sector)

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