

Diabetes Education given to Employed Carers

HLNT Position Statement

May 2010

Background

Healthy Living NT (HLNT) health professional staff ⁽¹⁾ provide diabetes and related education and/or training to:

- People with diabetes, often in association with a family member(s)/significant other(s)
- Qualified health professional staff involved in the care of people with diabetes
- Employed Carers, who are not health professionals and who are employed by health or support services to provide formal care for people with diabetes

HLNT Registered Nurses practice within professional, ethical and competency standards auspiced by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council⁽²⁾ and within professional and ethical guidelines of the Australian Diabetes Educators Association.

In all education provided by HLNT staff, the paramount concern is the client (the person with diabetes) and to ensure they receive effective, current and high quality advice and care appropriate to their needs.

Education for Employed Carers

Healthy Living NT (HLNT) health professional staff regularly delivers education and training to staff employed by a service who provide care to people with diabetes. There are professional and ethical requirements which guide HLNT in what training we can and cannot deliver, particularly where these staff are Employed and Unlicensed Carers (having no health professional qualifications or not having current or specific competencies).

HLNT can give Employed Carers education covering:

- The diagnosis of diabetes
- What is diabetes
- Signs and symptoms of diabetes
- Risk factors of diabetes
- Long term complications
- The management of diabetes
- Medications used in diabetes
- Blood glucose monitoring
- Safe handling and disposal of sharps
- Dietary management of diabetes

Under the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council standards, Registered Nurses are required (amongst other things) to be accountable for the provision of safe and

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Healthy Living NT
is the trading name of the
Diabetes Association
of the Northern Territory
Incorporated.

Healthy Living NT
is the registered NT
licence holder for
Life. Be in it.



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competent nursing care. This includes ensuring that their practice does not exceed their scope of competency, recognising the differences in accountability and responsibility between RNs, ENs and unlicensed care workers and only delegating aspects of care to others according to their competence and scope of practice. It is therefore not appropriate for HLNT Registered Nurses to give education to Employed/Unlicensed Carers regarding the administration of injections i.e. insulin, particularly where the carer has no established qualifications, training or competency

HLNT believes that training in the administration of injections and medication management for any Employed Carer should be conducted through an accredited training facility and result in the attainment of formally recognised and relevant competencies. This maintains best practice and quality services for the person with diabetes as well as the staff involved and the employing service. Healthy Living NT does not have RTO (Registered Training Organisation) status and cannot provide accredited training courses for Employed Carers in this area.

Employing services should also note that insulin administration by carers adds another layer of duty of care including implementation of policies relating to:

- handling of blood and blood products,
- management of needle stick injuries,
- the effects and actions of insulin,
- emergency management and
- established delegations and supervision of practice.

Where Employed/Unlicensed Carers have attained relevant competencies in administration of injections and medication management and their employing service has appropriate policies and standards of delegation and supervision in place, HLNT can provide additional support education. This will include, as a minimum, the following:

- Actions and effects of insulin
- Injection sites and site rotation
- Insulin storage and preparation
- Insulin delivery devices
- Use of single use lancing devices
- Sharps use and disposal
- Hypoglycaemia – causes, signs, symptoms and management
- Emergency management and knowing when to refer.

As the majority of carer services in the NT are substantively funded by the Department of Health and Families, Healthy Living NT continues to advocate for the establishment of an NT-wide policy on this matter that addresses appropriate standards for both carers and their employers and which promotes quality of care for the person with diabetes.

Healthy Living NT would welcome the opportunity of collaborating with the Department of Health and Families and the sector in the development of such a policy.

- (1) Health professional staff include dietitians who advise on diet and nutrition matters and Registered Nurses with either post-graduate qualifications in diabetes education or have attained Credentialed Diabetes Nurse Educator status.
- (2) Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in Australia; Code of Ethics for Nurses in Australia & National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council.

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