

Sexuality in emerging adults with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus:

A preliminary study using thematic analysis

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Rationale: Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (T1DM) is one of the most prevalent pediatric chronic conditions in the world and it is associated with the development of long-term complications such as sexual and/or reproductive health problems. However, research exploring this topic among T1DM emerging adults has been scarce.

Research Question: This study seeks to explore the perceptions of T1DM emerging adults regarding their sexual and reproductive health to answer the global question: How T1DM emerging adults perceive the association between T1DM and their amorous relationship and SRH?

Method: Using a participatory research approach, we present a preliminary qualitative study using thematic analysis of the answers to open questions of an online qualitative exploratory survey. The participants were 59 Portuguese speaking emerging adults (ages 18-35), with a T1DM diagnosis.

Results: The main findings establish that sexual and reproductive health themes are important challenges, doubts and experiences in the context of romantic relationships. Namely, hypo and hyperglycemia and insulin pump management during sexual intercourse were identified as frequent codes associated with specific response strategies. Moreover, themes around emotional experiences associated with partner involvement in disease management during sexual activity or with family planning were found across answers.

Conclusions: The findings emphasize the importance of research on sexual and reproductive health among the population of T1DM emerging adults. In particular, it is essential to give more attention to the multidisciplinary approach to the needs of this population and to the bidirectional influence of dyadic relationships and health, especially the role of health professionals and romantic partners in promoting emerging adults' sexual health and well-being.

Key Words: Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus; Sexuality; Sexual and Reproductive Health; Emerging adults; Thematic analyses; Romantic relationships.

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