

A web-based self-management programme for people with type 2 diabetes: the HeLP-Diabetes research programme including RCT

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Plain English summary

The HeLP-Diabetes research programme including RCT

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Plain English summary

We developed, trialled and evaluated the HeLP-Diabetes programme, which is an online self-management programme for people with type 2 diabetes mellitus. To ensure that it met the needs of patients and health-care professionals (HCPs), we worked with patients, professionals, psychologists, sociologists, health services researchers, software engineers and web designers.

We took a broad approach to self-management and addressed the need for patients to adopt healthier behaviours, work with HCPs and manage negative emotions and changing feelings about themselves. Our goal was to help them to manage these different tasks throughout their illness.

We evaluated the HeLP-Diabetes programme in a randomised controlled trial. Volunteers were referred randomly to either the HeLP-Diabetes programme website or a simpler website, which was similar to NHS Choices. Although the people who volunteered for the trial had better control of their diabetes mellitus than most patients, after 12 months the people using the HeLP-Diabetes programme website had clinically better diabetes mellitus control than those using the simple website.

Overall, there was no difference in the levels of people's distress but the HeLP-Diabetes programme appeared to reduce distress among participants who had been more recently diagnosed with diabetes mellitus. The economic analysis showed that the HeLP-Diabetes programme improved outcomes and reduced costs.

The evaluation also showed that the programme was acceptable to HCPs and fitted well with NHS priorities. When HCPs invested time into helping people access the HeLP-Diabetes programme, it was possible to overcome the 'digital divide': over half of users who were helped by HCPs came from black or ethnic minority backgrounds, one-third had had no education after leaving school at 16 years old and one-third described themselves as having only 'basic' computer skills.

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