

## Patient Values in EBM: A Case of Insulin Initiation in Type 2 Diabetes

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### Introduction

Patient values are an important but often neglected component of evidence based medicine. Most research studies focus on the best available evidence while clinical practice still relies heavily on clinical expertise. This study therefore aimed to explore the range of patient values in the context of insulin initiation among people with type 2 diabetes.

### Methods

Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 patients with type 2 diabetes who were at various stages of making decisions about starting insulin therapy. The interviews were conducted by the researchers using a topic guide. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and the transcripts were used as data for analysis using a thematic approach.

### Results

Patients described both abstract values and insulin-specific values when making a decision about insulin. Abstract values can be defined as a patient's priorities in life. Examples include family or marriage, financial status, health status, avoidance of suffering and career. Besides abstract values, patients also described insulin-specific attitudes which could be positive or negative. Negative attitudes are such as fear of needles and hypos, whilst positive attitudes include the belief that insulin has fewer side effects than oral medications. The combination of abstract and specific values helped patients to decide on whether or not to initiate insulin. For example, a patient who values their career would choose to initiate insulin if they believed that insulin helped them remain productive by avoiding complications, but would not choose insulin if they believed that insulin would interfere with their work lifestyle.

### Conclusion

When practicing evidence-based medicine, healthcare professionals should address both abstract as well as treatment-specific patient values.

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