Chapter 8

A Stepped Care mHealth-Based Approach for Promoting Patient Engagement in Chronic Care Management of Obesity with Type 2 Diabetes

Gianluca Castelnuovo
Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Italy

Giada Pietrabissa
Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Italy

Gian Mauro Manzoni
Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Italy

Stefania Corti
Istituto Auxologico Italiano IRCCS, Italy

Margherita Novelli
Istituto Auxologico Italiano IRCCS, Italy

Maria Borrello
University of Bergamo, Italy

Emanuele Maria Giusti
Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Italy

Francesco Borgia
Istituto Auxologico Italiano IRCCS, Italy

Enrico Molinari
Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Italy

Nicole Ann Middleton
University of South Australia, Australia

Roberto Cattivelli
Istituto Auxologico Italiano IRCCS, Italy

Susan Simpson
University of South Australia, Australia

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-0663-8.ch008

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Diabesity could be defined as a new global epidemic of obesity and being overweight with many complications and chronic conditions. The financial direct and indirect burden of diabesity is a real challenge in many Western health-care systems. Even if multidisciplinary protocols have been implemented, significant limitations in the chronic care management of obesity with type 2 diabetes concern costs and long-term adherence and efficacy. mHealth approach could overcome limitations linked with the traditional, restricted and highly expensive in-patient treatment of diabesity. The mHealth approach could help clinicians by motivating patients in remote settings to develop healthier lifestyles and could be implemented in the Chronic Care Model. A practical stepped-care model for diabesity, including mhealth approach and psychological treatments with different intensity, is discussed.

Francine Kaufman coined the term “diabesity” (diabetes + obesity) to describe the dangerous combination of obesity, insulin resistance, metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes (Jones, 2006; Kresser, 2014a, 2014b; Leiter et al., 2013).

Diabesity could be defined as a new global epidemic of obesity and being overweight with many complications and chronic conditions. Such conditions include not only type 2 diabetes, but also cardiovascular diseases, hypertension, dyslipidemia, hypercholesterolemia, cancer, and various psychosocial and psychopathological disorders (Byrne, Cooper, & Fairburn, 2004; Castelnuovo et al., 2014; Flegal, Graubard, Williamson, & Gail, 2005; Wadden, Brownell, & Foster, 2002; Whitlock et al., 2009).

The etiology of diabesity is universally recognized as multifactorial with a complex interaction between genetic, individual, and environmental factors (Marcus & Wildes, 2009). Genetics plays an important role, but behavioral factors, such as a dysfunctional diet and low physical activity, are among the main modifiable and proximal causes strictly connected to obesity and obesity-related complications (Dombrowski et al., 2012).

Diabetes is emerging as a relevant chronic disease in the USA, particularly among children. The financial direct and indirect burden (considering also the clinical resources involved and the loss of productivity) is a real challenge in many Western health-care systems (Malvey & Slovensky, 2014). The total costs of diagnosed diabetes grew from US$ 174 billion in 2007 to US$ 245 billion in 2012 with an increasing of 41 (American Diabetes Association [ADA], 2013).
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