The Complex Dual Diagnosis of Diabetes and Cancer

Crystal Stevens, MSN, ARNP, RN, Shirley Dinkel, PhD, ARNP, RN, and Jeanne Catanzaro, MSN, RN

Diabetes and cancer are two of the top three killers in the United States. As the number of people surviving cancer increases, more patients will be living with both cancer and diabetes. This integrative review of the literature will provide an overview of diabetes, cancer, and the complex interactions between the two. A literature search was conducted and three main areas were identified that warrant additional discussion: the relationship between glucocorticoids and hyperglycemia, glucose control in the management of diabetes in patients with cancer, and an increased risk of certain cancers with the comorbid condition of diabetes. The hope is that, through additional research, evidence-based practice guidelines can be developed to direct the care of these challenging comorbid conditions. To provide holistic care to patients, diabetes and cancer management must be incorporated into healthcare curricula and should be an essential part of clinical diabetes educator certification.

At a Glance

- The dual diagnoses of diabetes and cancer are complex for patients and providers.
- Cancer treatments can influence control of diabetes.
- Healthcare education curricula must include more information on the relationship between diabetes and cancer.

Diabetes

Diabetes is a complex disease with multiple pathologic components and is an epidemic in the United States. An estimated 8% of the U.S. population (or about 25.8 million people) have diabetes.

Crystall Stevens, MSN, ARNP, RN, is an assistant professor, Shirley Dinkel, PhD, ARNP, RN, is an associate professor, and Jeanne Catanzaro, MSN, RN, is an assistant professor, all in the School of Nursing at Washburn University in Topeka, KS. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the article. The authors did not receive honoraria for this work. The content of this article has been reviewed by independent peer reviewers to ensure that it is balanced, objective, and free from commercial bias. No financial relationships relevant to the content of this article have been disclosed by the authors, planners, independent peer reviewers, or editorial staff. (First submission December 2010. Revision submitted March 2011. Accepted for publication April 7, 2011.)

Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/11.CJON.654-658