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Title of project: Disturbed Eating Behavior among Children and Adolescents with Type 1 Diabetes – an Observational and Explorative Study of Prevalence, Psychosocial and Clinical Characteristics

ABSTRACT

Eating disorders (ED) are more common among individuals with type 1 diabetes (T1D) compared to people without diabetes. Studies suggest that adolescents with T1D are 2.4 times more likely to develop an ED compared with their peers without T1D. The co-occurrence of T1D and ED increases the risk of poorer diabetes regulation and development of diabetes-related complications. Recent studies demonstrate a positive association between an elevated HbA1c and clinical ED, subclinical ED and intentional insulin manipulation. Furthermore, mortality risk is threefold increased, when ED or insulin restriction co-exist with diabetes resulting in Standard Mortality Rate of 14.5 for the comorbid cases.

Disturbed eating behavior (DEB) can be defined as multiple inappropriate actions in regard to weight control but symptoms not yet at frequency or severity to qualify for a formal ED diagnosis. Children and adolescents with T1D have an increased risk of developing DEB, which can contribute to a much poorer outcome in T1D. The clinical guidelines available from the Danish Pediatric Society and from International Society of Pediatric and Adolescent Diabetes (ISPAD) recommends annual screening for psychiatric problems, and an ongoing attention to occurrence of EDs, but nonetheless there are currently no clinical interventions involving systematic screening and treatment for patients with DEB or ED and T1D, either nationally nor internationally.

The objective of the study is to validate a diabetes-specific screening tool, and to estimate the prevalence, severity and characteristics of DEB and ED in Danish children and adolescents with T1D. The study seeks to correlate DEB and ED to clinical variables, but will also apply an explorative approach to investigate the triggering and persistent mechanisms, hereby creating a basis for the development of the best clinical practice in this highly specific field involving the entire spectrum; screening, treatment modalities and the prevention of both DEB and ED.

The study has extensive future research potential as it enables a long-term follow up and an effect study on early onset multidisciplinary intervention.