

Professor, PhD, **Jackie Sturt**.

Place of employment and host institution: King's College, London, United Kingdom and Steno Diabetes Center Copenhagen

Host principal investigator: Head of Research **Ingrid Willaing Tapager**, Steno Diabetes Center Copenhagen

Title of project: Strengthening wellbeing in diabetes through intimate partner relationships using perspectives from social and behavioural sciences

ABSTRACT

Couples living with type 1 and type 2 diabetes can face significant challenges to their relationships directly associated with living with diabetes. Partners of people with diabetes can experience higher levels of diabetes distress than the person with diabetes.

International public health policy recognises the health and wellbeing advantages, to both partners, of living in a resilient and supportive relationship. In Spring 2019, 18 people with diabetes from the user panel at Steno Diabetes Center Copenhagen attended a research meeting to signpost research priorities from their point of view. Family focused research was a top priority. Steno investigators have expertise in family relationships in families with type 2 diabetes and in diabetes distress in people with type 1 diabetes. Research has explored the mental and physical health impact of relationship distress on couples but few relationship interventions exist. Recent studies in the UK and Italy have begun to explore challenges and needs with couples living with type 1 and type 2 diabetes, and how the couples would like to be supported to live resiliently with diabetes. We propose a Visiting Professorship to Steno Diabetes Center Copenhagen (SDCC), Diabetes Management Research, working with host principal investigator Ingrid Willaing, to bring these interventional ideas to Denmark and to work with Steno investigators to broaden their current work by incorporating intimate couples' needs. The proposed Visiting Professor will spend 30% of their time during a 6-month period working with Steno investigators. This will be achieved by spending 1 week every 4 weeks working at SDCC. During these week-long visits the researchers will combine their knowledge and consult with more people with type 1 and 2 diabetes in workshops to develop couples' interventions that will lead to better health and wellbeing for both partners. With newly developed interventions we will share new research knowledge to the other Steno centres in Denmark and to other relevant institutions, e.g. communities. We will develop further research plans to implement and test whether these interventions work to improve quality of life and relationships for a wider group of Danish couples living with diabetes.