

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

Stratford Campus Research Day

26th Annual Research Day

May 5th, 12:00 AM

A Case of Diabulimia in a 23-Year-Old Woman with Extensive Comorbidities

Stephen Poos
Rowan University

Kaitlin McGowan
Rowan University

Ashaki Martin
Hackensack Meridian Ocean University Medical Center

Follow this and additional works at: https://rdw.rowan.edu/stratford_research_day



Part of the [Endocrine System Diseases Commons](#), [Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Metabolism Commons](#), [Nutritional and Metabolic Diseases Commons](#), and the [Psychiatry Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you - share your thoughts on our [feedback form](#).

Poos, Stephen; McGowan, Kaitlin; and Martin, Ashaki, "A Case of Diabulimia in a 23-Year-Old Woman with Extensive Comorbidities" (2022). *Stratford Campus Research Day*. 4.
https://rdw.rowan.edu/stratford_research_day/2022/May5/4

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences, Events, and Symposia at Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Stratford Campus Research Day by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works.

A Case of Diabulimia in a 23-Year-Old Woman with Extensive Comorbidities

Stephen Poos, OMS-III; Kaitlin McGowan, OMS-III; Ashaki Martin, MD

Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine • Stratford, NJ 08084
Hackensack Meridian Ocean University Medical Center • Brick, NJ 08724

Abstract

- Diabulimia is defined as intentionally withholding insulin injections for the purpose of weight loss in the setting of type 1 diabetes mellitus (T1D).
- It is characterized as an eating disorder (ED), although does not yet have DSM diagnosis status.
- Recognition of the condition among medical professionals is limited but growing.

Literature Review

31%

- Percentage of females with T1D ranging in age from 13-60 years, reporting having intentionally omitted insulin over the course of their disease (1)

9%

- Percentage of respondents indicating that this behavior occurred frequently (1)

50%

- Among those omitting insulin, half stated that weight control was their primary reason for their behavior (1)

30%

- Percentage of teens with T1D reporting depressive symptoms (2)
- Increased severity correlates with increased hospitalizations (3)

7%

- Percentage of adolescents with T1D reporting concurrent eating disorder (4)

Case Study

- 23-year-old Caucasian female evaluated in the critical care unit for diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) without coma in December 2021.
- Prior to admission, the patient had been restricting her food and insulin intake, sometimes withholding food and insulin for up to several days at a time.
- Denies bingeing or purging.
- Sixth hospitalization for DKA in as many months.
- Admitted to skipping insulin with the intention of losing weight.
- Past medical history
 - Type 1 diabetes mellitus
 - Major depressive disorder
 - Generalized anxiety disorder
 - Post-traumatic stress disorder
 - Complex regional pain syndrome type 1
 - Suicide attempt
- Social history
 - Sexual assault
 - Unstable access to mental healthcare, psychotropic medication, and food
 - Lives alone with father, mother is deceased
 - Unemployed, poor economic support
 - Lack of reliable transportation to medical appointments
 - Baseline level of function was lying in bed most of the time

Treatment

- Hospital course
 - Stabilized with IV insulin drip, thiamine, magnesium, phosphorus, and fluids
 - Started on sertraline, nortriptyline, and prazosin.
- Outcome
 - Admitted to partial in-patient eating disorder program, discharged January 2022
 - Readmitted twice in February 2022 for DKA
 - Discharged to home with home care, intensive outpatient program, ED support group

Discussion

- This case is notable for the extensive comorbidities present and the shortcomings in adequately addressing them.
- Diabulimia patients report negative experiences with the healthcare system (5).
- There is a need for provider education on diabulimia and a multidisciplinary response.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the psychiatry department at Ocean University Medical Center for their support and assistance.

References

1. Polonsky WH, Anderson BJ, Lohrer PA, et al. Insulin omission in women with IDDM. *Diabetes Care*. 1994;17:1178-85.
2. Buchberger B, Huppertz H, Krabbe L, et al. Symptoms of depression and anxiety in youth with type 1 diabetes: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*. 2016;70:70-84.
3. Stewart SM, Roa U, Emslie GJ, et al. Depressive symptoms predict hospitalization for adolescents with type 1 diabetes mellitus. *Pediatrics*. 2005;115:1315-9.
4. Young V, Eiser C, Johnson B, et al. Eating problems in adolescents with Type 1 diabetes: a systematic review with meta-analysis. *Diabet Med*. 2013;30(2):189-98.
5. Coleman SE, Caswell N. Diabetes and eating disorders: an exploration of 'Diabulimia'. *BMC Psychol*. 2020;8(1):101.