

“Art and Science as a Change Agent” - A Case Study

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Establishing a therapeutic alliance is an art that involves the use of interpersonal skills, values, and personal traits that cultivates a relationship with the patient (1). Science provides core knowledge and essential strategies to facilitate evidence based change. None more so than this case study.

Mrs. JW, a depressed 46 year old type 1 diabetic for 31 years with a complex medical history, presented to our service with a referral to commence insulin pump therapy. Initial visit revealed a cognitively impaired patient with poor vision, secondary to retinopathy and distal right upper limb weakness related to a stroke. All facets of health care and activities of daily living (ADL's) are dependent on mother's assistance.

Navigating through the medical maze revealed a history of poor diabetes self management and inability to comprehend the complexities of a continuous subcutaneous insulin pump. It was obvious that she did not meet the criteria for initiation of pump therapy. As diabetes educators, we should have the interpersonal skills, values, and personal traits needed to cultivate relationships with patients that are characterised by trust, respect, and acceptance. The team decided to offer her a trial. So began “THE ART”

It was important to incorporate a multi-disciplinary team approach involving an endocrinologist, diabetes educator, dietitian and pump representative. After a trial living with a pump primed with saline for 3 months, it was mutually agreed pump therapy was not suitable for her.

The art of diabetes education markedly improved her understanding of the importance of diabetes self management which was highlighted by a drop of her HBA1c from 12.2% to 9.6%, and re-establishing hypo-awareness.

(1) Anderson RM, Funnell MM, (2008) The art and science of diabetes education: a culture out of balance, *The Diabetes Educator* Jan-Feb;Vol.34(1):pp109-17.