

Women's experiences of managing gestational diabetes through diet

Robyn L Lawrence¹, Kim Ward², Clare R Wall³, Frank H Bloomfield¹

¹The Liggins Institute, ²School of Nursing and ³Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Background

Gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM), a form of carbohydrate intolerance first diagnosed in pregnancy, can have serious health consequences for mother and baby. Diet is central to managing GDM. Women diagnosed with GDM are faced with the need to make many adaptations within a short period of time to control their blood sugars.

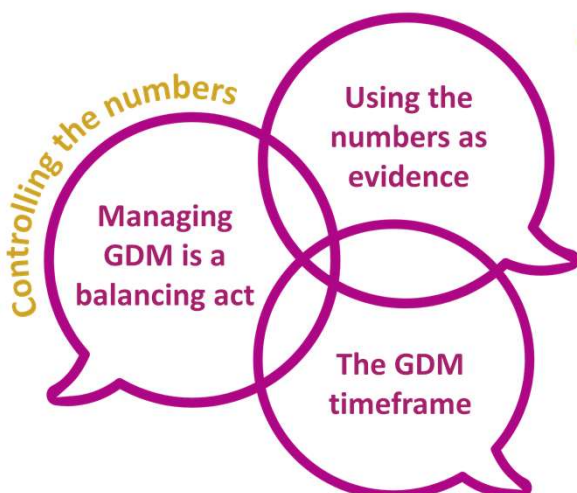
Methods

Women diagnosed with GDM before 30 weeks of pregnancy were recruited from two GDM clinics in Auckland. Data were generated from semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis was used to identify themes describing their experiences.

Aim: To describe how women with GDM perceive dietary advice and how this information influences their dietary decisions

Results

- 18 women participated in the study (median age of 34, range 28 to 41 years)
- Women were from a range of ethnic backgrounds
- 15 were experiencing GDM for the first time and women were diagnosed with GDM for a median of 10 weeks (range 4 to 22 weeks) before the interview
- 3 interconnected themes described women's perceptions of dietary advice and experiences in managing their GDM through diet to achieve their perceived objective of controlling the numbers (figure 1)



“When I do what she says, I’m fine.
It’s when I don’t that I go haywire!”

“I don’t want to get a 7 or 8 on my blood test so I’m not going to eat that.”

“Hopefully [the birth] will be the end of it... I’ll enjoy [food] after, at least it’s harming me not my baby.”

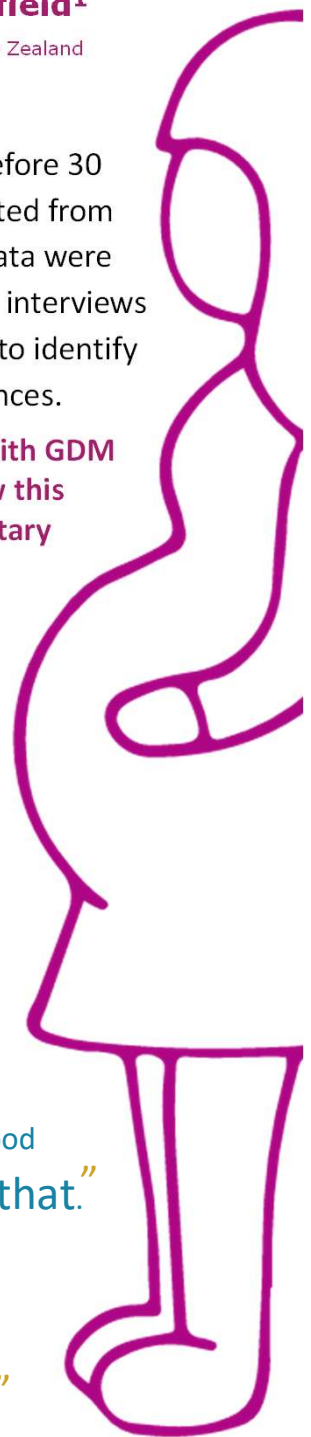


Figure 1. Themes and quotes describing women's experiences of managing GDM through diet

Conclusions

Women's relationships with healthcare providers have a significant impact on how they perceive advice. Woman-centred care that is empathetic and individually tailored is better received and likely to have a greater impact on women's dietary intentions in the short and long-term.