

## Research to help us identify and address problematic polypharmacy in people with diabetes

This highlight notice invites researchers to apply for funding for research aiming to identify and reduce problematic polypharmacy in people living with diabetes.

Polypharmacy is often defined as using five or more medications, and is common in people living with diabetes, especially as they get older. Diabetes is often linked to other long-term health conditions, which may all be treated with different medications. Dealing with lots of different types of medication can be overwhelming and can affect how people manage their diabetes.

Polypharmacy is also linked to worse outcomes, including, problems with large blood vessels, more hospital admissions, and a higher risk of dying. This might be due to increased numbers of health conditions in these groups. But it could also be caused by polypharmacy itself, which can increase the risk of medications interacting with each other, lower medication taking, and can negatively affect peoples' quality of life.

While some forms of polypharmacy are difficult to avoid, wrongly prescribing medications can also be part of the problem, and this is called problematic polypharmacy. We need to be able to tell the difference between appropriate and problematic polypharmacy and help to reduce inappropriate prescribing, safely and effectively.

The [Diabetes Research Steering Groups](#) have identified the need for further research to better understand:

- What is the current extent of polypharmacy and deprescribing (stopping prescribing medications) in those with diabetes, and how is it associated with sociodemographic status, frailty, and multiple long-term health conditions?
- What tools and interventions are effective in finding and reducing inappropriate prescribing/problematic polypharmacy safely?
- What are the costs and benefits of addressing inappropriate prescribing/problematic polypharmacy in people with diabetes?

Hannah Syed, a clinical pharmacist, and co-writer of the highlight notice, said:

“People living with diabetes are at considerable risk of polypharmacy, this may be appropriate and explained by the need to treat multiple conditions, however in some cases it can be problematic and impact on the quality of life of people living with diabetes. It can lead to people taking many tablets every day, some of which may not be necessary, especially within certain groups. However, research which identifies and addresses problematic polypharmacy is incredibly important so that we can better understand and address the problem in partnership with people living with diabetes, making the greatest difference to their lives.”