

“I am the Pancreas of my Baby!” Six Years of Virtual Peer Coaching for Better Glycemic Control

“Hello, friends. I am the mother of a 2-year-old; someone who thought she had died of diabetes. But now, in the presence of you, I declare that I am fine, and I am proud of myself that I am the pancreas of my child. Congratulations on reaching 500 members.” This message is from one of the mothers in the Shirin (sweet) Family Club on the group hitting 500 members milestone. The Shirin Family Club was launched in early 2016 with 96 parents of diabetic children on the Telegram network as a diabetes case-finding initiative.^[1] The primary purpose of this group was to educate and empower families with diabetic children, inform them about research, and involve and encourage diabetic children to participate in it. However, shortly after the club was formed, a shift in group relations occurred, with members getting closer and friendlier with each other. This change increased empathy and group collaboration, which helped improve glycemic control in children participating in group activities.

Today, about 6 years after the club’s start, the group hosts 519 members who continue to help each other better manage their children’s diabetes through education and information with the slogan “Empathy and Green Sugar.” The Telegram’s statistics section indicates that, as of January 1, 2021, this virtual club had 341 viewing members and 154 posting members. Between December 20 and 27, 2020, 426,1000 messages were exchanged. Unrelated messages are restricted in the group and would be removed by admins, except on Fridays (weekends) and holidays. The club’s most active days were Thursdays with 19%, whereas Saturdays and Sundays with 11% were usually the least active days. The club is currently managed by four admins, each of whom has a history of coaching diabetic patients in non-governmental organizations.

In response to the question, “How effective do you think attending Shirin Family Club meetings is for your own or your child’s glycemic control?” using the Telegram internal voting tool, out of 80 respondents, 63 (78%) found attending the club very effective in controlling blood sugar and 11 (14%) considered it somewhat effective. Six (7%) also stated that attending the club did not affect glycemic control.

Different peer education patterns for diabetes management have shown different efficiencies.^[2,3] Nevertheless, the use of cyberspace and the formation of peer coaching clubs, especially to improve the glycemic control of diabetic children, is an experience that has received less attention.^[4] Shirin Family Club is one of the models that has shown significant effectiveness to date. Given the high rate of failure in glycemic control in children and adolescents, it seems that the development of this model with the participation of diabetic children’s parents and cultural

considerations can play an influential role in the glycemic control of diabetic children and adolescents.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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