

## Digital Communication - The Future of Chronic Disease Management Is Healthcare Apps

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**Abstract :** During a period of increased anxiety and stress, communication became the essential tool to help the public stay informed and feel prepared during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, certain groups of patients were not feeling as reassured. The news and media blasted the message that patients with diabetes were "high-risk" in regards to contracting the Covid-19 infection. Routine clinics were being cancelled, GP practices were closing their doors, and patients with type 1 diabetes were understandably scared. The influx of calls to diabetes specialists nurses from concerned patients highlighted the need for better and more specialised information. An Application specifically for patients with type 1 diabetes was created to deliver this information, and it proved to be the essential communication tool that was desperately needed. The Application for patients with type 1 diabetes aimed to deliver specialist information to patients in regards to their diagnosis, management, and ongoing follow-up commitments. The Application gives practical advice on multiple areas of diabetes management, including sick-day rules and diabetic emergencies, as well as up-to-date information on technology, including setting up Libre devices and downloading glucose meters to facilitate attending virtual clinics. Delivery of this information in an easy-to-understand and comprehensive way is intended to improve patient engagement with diabetes services and ultimately empower patients in the control of their own disease. The application also offers a messaging service to allow the diabetes team to send out alerts to patient groups on specific issues, such as changes to clinics, or respond to recent news updates regarding Covid-19. The App was launched in NHS Fife in June 2020 and has amassed 800 active users so far. There is growing engagement with the App since its launch, with over 1000 user interactions in the last month alone. Feedback shows that 100% of users like the App and have found it useful in the management of their diabetes. The App has proven to be an essential tool in communication with one of the most vulnerable groups during the Covid-19 pandemic, and its ongoing development will continue to increase patient engagement and improve glycaemic control for patients with type 1 diabetes. The future of chronic disease management should involve digital solutions such as apps to further empower patients in their healthcare.

**Keywords :** diabetes, endocrinology, digital healthcare, medical apps

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