A Critical Examination of the Lived Experiences of Somali Immigrants and Refugees Diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes and their Family Support Systems

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Research indicates that individuals of Somali descent display an elevated burden of type 2 diabetes (T2D) compared to the general population, especially those that have been forcibly displaced from their countries of origin (Kinzie et al., 2008; Njeru et al., 2016). Despite their elevated risk for acquiring T2D, very little is known regarding the lived experiences of Somali immigrants and refugees, particularly in Canada. This critical narrative inquiry aims to address this gap in the literature by exploring the collective experiences of Somali immigrant and refugees diagnosed with T2D and their immediate family members to understand how the process of resettlement impacts their management of T2D and how they come to terms with this illness. Family members were included in this study due to the role they may serve in the management of diabetes and the preference for collective support in this population (Black, Maitland, Hilbers, & Orinuela, 2017; Stewart et al., 2008). Data were collected via individual face-to-face interviews from Fall 2017 to December 2018 in various locations in the Greater Toronto Area. A total of 37 individuals were interviewed for this study, including 19 family members and 18 individuals living with T2D. Preliminary research findings reveal: 1) diabetes as bitter-sweet: divergent coping styles and cultural worldviews; 2) personal and community safety as a competing need in diabetes care; and 3) the gendering of diabetes dialogue, management, and care. These initial themes reveal both the stressors impacting the management of type 2 diabetes in this group, and the varied viewpoints towards their and/or family member’s condition.

References


