



## AIMS

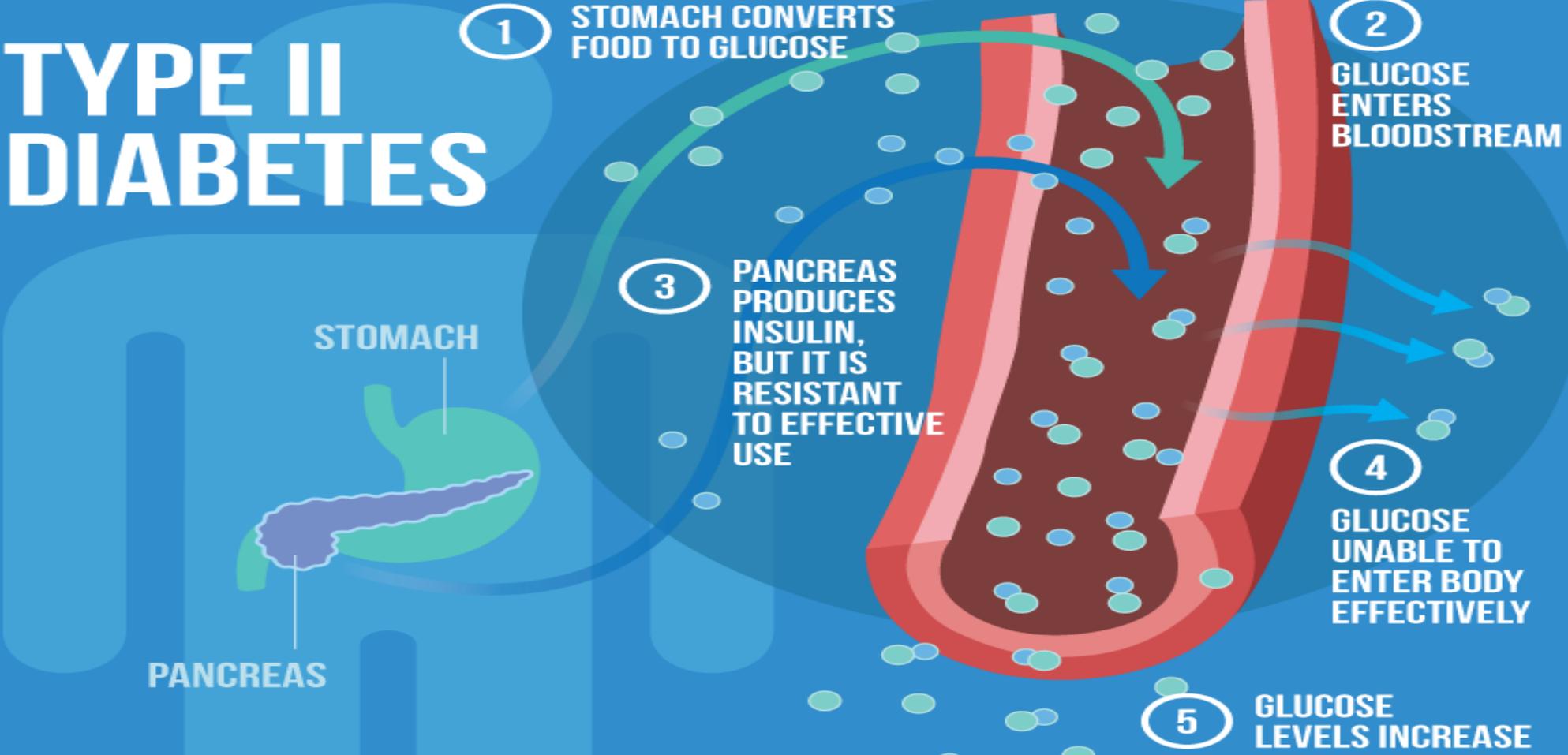
- To explore my own experience of learning to live with Type 2 Diabetes using an autoethnographical approach within a feminist framework.
- To discuss 'empowerment' in this personal context.

## DEFINITIONS (I): AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

- Describes and analyses personal experience
- Connects experiences to wider social & cultural context
- Several different types
- Still sometimes subject to criticism

# DEFINITIONS (2): TYPE 2 DIABETES

## TYPE II DIABETES



# POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

## Diabetic Retinopathy

Leading cause of blindness in adults



## Diabetic Nephropathy

Leading cause of end-stage renal disease



## Stroke

2- to 4-fold increase in cardiovascular mortality and stroke



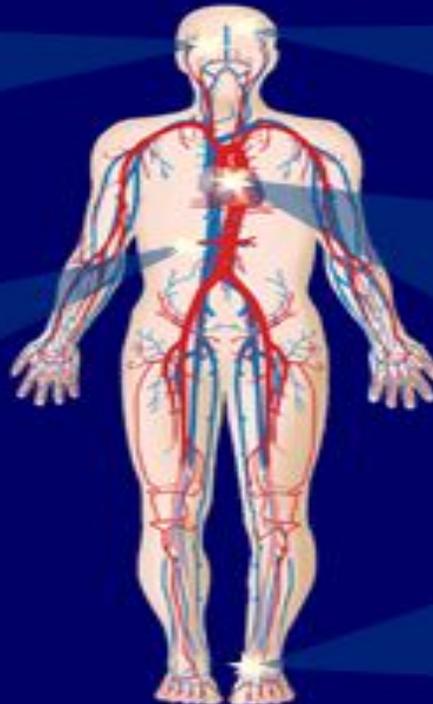
## Cardiovascular Disease

8/10 individuals with diabetes die from CV events



## Diabetic Neuropathy

Leading cause of non-traumatic lower extremity amputations



**There is no cure.....**



## DEFINITIONS (3): EMPOWERMENT

The ability to identify, access and use the resources necessary to take control of my illness.

This idea is central both to the UK National Health Service (NHS) philosophy of supporting patient choice and within a feminist perspective on health care.

# METHODS

Diabetes Diary & my test results

Personal reading

Observations during formal educational courses

Interactions with Diabetes UK and other patients

Reflective analysis



# REACTIONS TO INITIAL DIAGNOSIS



**Shock**

**DENIAL**

**fear**



**STRESS**



**Anger**

**YOU  
CAN  
DO  
THIS.**



**Get Help**

# THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY DIABETES CARE TEAM



# MY LEARNING JOURNEY: LIFESTYLE CHANGES



# MY LEARNING JOURNEY: ANNUAL TESTS

- Annual HbA1c test (measuring for glycated haemoglobin)
- Height, weight, blood pressure, cholesterol levels,
- Check for signs of diabetic retinopathy
- Kidney function (diabetic nephropathy)
- Condition of feet (diabetic neuropathy)
- Check for depressive symptoms

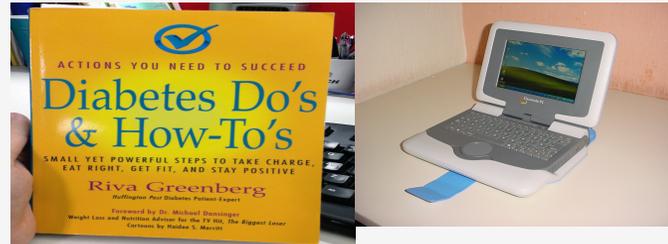


# MY LEARNING JOURNEY: GETTING MORE HELP

- Joined Diabetes UK



- Reading/ internet



- Learning to eat more healthily



- Increasing exercise



# MY LEARNING JOURNEY: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

The Expert Patient Programme: small group peer-led face-to-face (2009)

- Occasional national or local one day courses for Diabetes patients organised by Diabetes UK
- MOOC: *The Diabetes Epidemic: a Patient-Centred Approach* (University of Dundee) 2 weeks on-line (2016)

## PROGRESS IN EMPOWERING MYSELF

- Acceptance
- Increased knowledge of the condition
- Better ability to identify and access useful resources
- Improved ability to interact with health professionals
- Benefit from interaction with other patients

## REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS: SELF-MANAGEMENT AND OLDER WOMEN

- Self-management of a progressive chronic disease can be exhausting.
- There are regional differences in how much practical care Diabetes patients (of either sex) are offered or can access within the UK.
- The paternalistic nature of the health care team.

## REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS: SELF-MANAGEMENT AND OLDER WOMEN CONTINUED

Diversity of lifestyles: incorporating self-care

Confusing changes in dietary advice

Language and communication problems

Support may be inaccessible or inappropriate



## IMPLICATIONS

- As women's life expectancy increases and Type 2 Diabetes becomes an 'epidemic' across the world, we need a better focus on women's varied circumstances and on the daily challenges they face in managing a life-threatening illness.

