

The top 10 priorities for type 2 diabetes research: results from the Diabetes UK-James Lind Alliance Priority Setting Partnership

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Twenty per cent of the UK population are living with, or are at risk of, type 2 diabetes (T2D), with estimated annual NHS treatment costs of £8.8 billion(1). This rising tide identifies an urgent need to reduce uncertainties around the causes, prevention, and treatment of T2D. A patient-centred approach is a cornerstone of high quality diabetes care and is mirrored in research by an increasing focus on patient and public involvement (2). The James Lind Alliance (JLA) has a 13-year history of collaboration with patients, carers and clinicians identifying and prioritising unmet research needs to drive improvements in clinical care. A Priority Setting Partnership (PSP) was set up in 2015 by Diabetes UK and the JLA to identify key priorities for future T2D research.

The 4-step JLA process (3), was led by a steering group of people living with T2D and carers (PWDC) and multidisciplinary health care professionals (HCP). A pre-tested questionnaire was distributed to over 70,000 people to identify uncertainties or unanswered questions by asking, "What questions about type 2 diabetes would you like to see answered by research?". 2587 individual respondents to the questionnaire (76% PWDC, 24% HCPs, of whom 18% were from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups) submitted 7978 questions that were classified and collated in a preliminary prioritisation step to form 114 indicative questions. The indicative questions formed a subsequent interim survey to which 1506 people responded and ranked their top 10 questions. The top 10 questions ranked by PWDC, HCP, and BAME groups were combined with equal weighting into a shortlist of 24 questions. New representatives from PWDC, HCP and BAME groups were brought together in a final workshop facilitated by the JLA using nominal group techniques (4), to discuss and prioritise the top 10 questions and set these as priorities for T2D research (box 1).

This process represents one of the largest PSPs the JLA has undertaken to date and has had a wide reach amongst key target groups. Detailed methodology and findings will be published separately. The top 10 research priorities and wider outputs will be disseminated widely and researchers and research funders will be encouraged to be responsive to them, including via the newly formed Diabetes UK Clinical Studies Groups (5). There may be challenges to meeting the broad topics of these top 10 questions, and it should not stifle important research in other areas. We are confident that the rigour and scale of this PSP, and its authentic and passionate partnership between people living with T2D and professionals, have captured key priorities to drive T2D research with genuine impact.

Rank	What questions about type 2 diabetes would you like to see answered by research?
1	Can Type 2 diabetes be cured or reversed, what is the best way to achieve this and is there a point beyond which the condition can't be reversed?
2	How do we identify people at high risk of Type 2 diabetes and help to prevent the condition from developing?
3	What is the best way to encourage people with Type 2 diabetes, whoever they are and wherever they live, to self-manage their condition, and how should it be delivered?
4	How does stress and anxiety influence the management of Type 2 diabetes and does a positive mental wellbeing have an effect?
5	How can people with Type 2 diabetes be supported to make lifestyle changes to help them manage their condition, how effective are they and what stops them from working?
6	Why does Type 2 diabetes get progressively worse over time, what is the most effective way to slow or prevent progression and how can this be best measured?
7	Should diet and exercise be used as an alternative to medications for managing Type 2 diabetes, or alongside them?
8	What causes nerve damage in people with Type 2 diabetes, who does it affect most, how can we increase awareness of it and how can it be best prevented and treated?
9	How can psychological or social support be best used to help people with, or at risk of Type 2 diabetes, and how should this delivered to account for individual needs?
10	What role do fats, carbohydrates and proteins play in managing Type 2 diabetes, and are there risks and benefits to using particular approaches?

Box 1. Top 10 priorities for research in type 2 diabetes (in rank order of priority).

Contribution statement

All authors were members of the Diabetes UK-James Lind Alliance Type 2 diabetes Priority Setting Partnership (PSP) Steering Group and contributed equally to this work and to the interpretation of its findings. ER initiated and led the PSP on behalf of Diabetes UK. KC facilitated the PSP on behalf of the James Lind Alliance. AD analysed the data from participants. SF and AF led the academic interpretation of the data and wrote this correspondence, with contributions from all authors. PR provided a patient perspective during the PSP and write-up.

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Declaration of interests

The authors report no conflicting interests.

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