

17 July 2017

Submission on the subsidisation of FreeStyle Libre Flash Glucose Monitoring System on the National Diabetes Services Scheme

Diabetes Australia strongly supports the subsidisation of the FreeStyle Libre Flash Glucose Monitoring System on the National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS).

Day to day glucose monitoring is the most fundamental aspect of self management of diabetes and effective self monitoring enables people with diabetes to maintain optimal glucose levels, avoid serious hypoglycaemia, and achieve more time in their target glucose range. Often, obtaining a blood glucose reading is intrusive, disruptive and painful.

Currently, the affordable, subsidised glucose monitoring options for people with diabetes are limited to structured self monitoring using blood glucose test strips, and the recently subsidised Continuous Glucose Monitoring devices restricted to children and young people with type 1 diabetes under age 21 and subject to specific clinical eligibility criteria.

FreeStyle Libre Flash monitoring represents a new “category” of glucose monitoring which sits between standard/structured use of blood glucose test strips and CGM.

FreeStyle Libre provides some significant advantages:

- More self management information – at no additional costs, the person with diabetes can scan many times and get many data points and trend lines to inform insulin dosing and self management decisions
- It gives people with diabetes an option to easily and discreetly scan a sensor, which is worn unobtrusively under their clothes
- Less pain –a reduced number of painful finger pricks required
- Less stigma – testing can take place discreetly with no visible blood or lancet (sharps) device
- Less disruption – overnight and when checking during other activities, instead of requiring the individual to stop what they are doing, get their equipment out and take a finger prick, people can easily scan the sensor.

Glucose monitoring is one of the most difficult and intrusive parts of living with diabetes and Diabetes Australia welcomes technologies that provide people with more convenient, less painful and less disruptive ways of monitoring glucose levels. We support new technology that makes it easier for people to better self manage their condition, to reduce diabetes-related complications and ultimately improve health outcomes.

There are currently more than 360,000 Australians with diabetes using insulin and registered with the NDSS who could benefit from this technology.

The cost is currently prohibitive for many people with diabetes. Subsidisation would greatly improve affordability and access, and provide a new glucose monitoring approach and a new option to help thousands of Australians to self monitor their glucose levels and better self manage their condition.

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With the FreeStyle Libre system, people with diabetes can scan as many times a day as they like and receive instant feedback of their current glucose levels. This can be reassuring and improve decision making. Each one-second scan provides extensive data from which people with diabetes, their carers and their health professionals can make informed decisions about diabetes management. Data on glucose level trends, which the technology can provide, enhances a users' understanding of how glucose levels are affected by foods, physical activity and other variables. Learning from and responding to these trends leads to better diabetes self management. This can also reduce the fear of hypoglycaemia which can be a significant mental health burden for people with diabetes and families.

Research has already highlighted the improved health outcomes associated with FreeStyle Libre. A study published in the *Lancet* in 2016 found:

- A 40% reduction in the time spent in hypoglycaemia at night
- A 50% reduction in serious hypoglycaemia
- A 91% reduction in fingerprick tests of blood glucose levels.¹

Data provided by Abbott, drawing on more than 50,000 FreeStyle Libre readers across Europe found:

- Improved HbA1c (three-month average of blood glucose levels)
- Improved time with blood glucose levels in target range
- Reduction in incidents of hypo- and hyperglycaemia.

These outcomes help reduce the long term risk of debilitating and expensive diabetes-related complications, including vision loss, kidney damage, heart attack, stroke and limb amputation.

Choice is important for people with diabetes who want options when it comes to the technology they use to manage the condition. Many people with diabetes have reported a preference for FreeStyle Libre over other comparable, but different, diabetes technologies like continuous glucose monitoring. Some people find FreeStyle Libre more straight forward to use and/or less intrusive.

There is strong support within the diabetes community, including people with diabetes, families and clinicians, for the subsidisation of FreeStyle Libre Flash Glucose Monitoring on the NDSS to provide people with diabetes with more options to manage their glucose levels. We believe subsidising this technology will make a real and positive difference to health outcomes for many people with diabetes.

¹Bolinder, J., Antuna, R., Geelhoed-Duijvestijn, P., Kröger, J. and Weitgasser, R. (2016). Novel glucose-sensing technology and hypoglycaemia in type 1 diabetes: a multicentre, non-masked, randomised controlled trial. *The Lancet*, 388(10057), pp.2254-2263.