**Abstract Title:** Fostering emotional resilience in adults with diabetes: Qualitative insights from the MIND-MAP study

**Background & Aim:** Up to 50% of adults with diabetes experience diabetes distress or other psychological challenges, yet little is known about what supports their positive mental health. This study explored how adults with type 1 (T1D) and type 2 diabetes (T2D) foster positive mental health and emotional resilience and their preferences for mental health support.

**Methods:** MIND-MAP (Mental health IN Diabetes Monitoring And Pathways) is a large Victorian cohort study (n=1,667) conducted as a partnership between a multidisciplinary research team (health psychology, diabetes education) and a Community Advisory Group (n=5, T1D, n=7, T2D). This qualitative sub-study purposely sampled (from the MIND-MAP cohort) people experiencing elevated distress or mental health symptoms. Semi-structured interviews (mean: 27 minutes) were conducted via phone or video and audio recorded. The interviews explored participants lived experiences, emotional needs and support preferences. Interview transcripts were thematically analysed using a phenomenological approach.

**Results:** Participants were 32 Victorian adults (50% type 1, 50% type 2; median age [interquartile range] range: 56 [34, 69.5], 18-78). They described five protective factors for positive mental health and emotional resilience:

* peer and family support
* empathetic, accessible health professionals
* internal resilience and acceptance
* self-care strategies such as exercise and time in nature
* flexible, supportive work environments.

Regarding support preferences, participants called for more peer support opportunities, better integration of mental health into diabetes care (particularly during the early stages of diabetes diagnosis), tailored information about mental health, and stigma-free communication from their health professionals and the community.

**Conclusion:** Adults with diabetes report a preference for person-centred approaches that embed mental health into diabetes care to enhance emotional well-being and self-management. Findings support expanding access to diabetes-informed mental health services and upskilling health professionals to recognise and address the psychological challenges of diabetes management, fostering empathy and reducing stigma.