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Gender Differences in Adherence and Metabolic Control in Urban Youth with Poorly Controlled Type 1 Diabetes: The Mediating Role of Mental Health Symptoms

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Objective To examine gender differences in adherence and metabolic control and test the mediating role of mental health symptoms in a sample of predominantly African-American, low-income youth with chronically poor metabolic control. **Methods** Baseline questionnaire data from an intervention study were collected from 119 youth and their primary caregiver. **Results** Boys had worse adherence than girls, but there were no gender differences in hemoglobin A1C (HbA1C). Boys had more externalizing symptoms, whereas girls had more anxiety; there were no gender differences in depression.

Externalizing symptoms were associated with poor adherence and metabolic control. Although anxiety was correlated with poor adherence, this relationship was not significant in the invariate analysis. Results of structural equation modeling (SEM) suggested that externalizing symptoms mediated the relationship between gender and adherence. **Conclusions** Results suggest that gender differences in adherence may be attributed, in part, to gender differences in externalizing symptoms in urban youth with poor metabolic control. Interventions targeting these symptoms may be necessary to improve adherence and HbA1C in both boys and girls.

Key words: adherence; diabetes; gender; mental health; youth.

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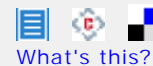
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