Coaching helps diabetes patients cope with the disease

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(HealthDay)—Mental health coaching may help diabetes patients with depression and with management of blood glucose levels, a new study suggests. The study was presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Diabetes Educators, held from Aug. 6 to 9 in Orlando, Fla.

The study included diabetes patients in a rural, low-income area of central North Carolina. The researchers referred 182 patients with newly diagnosed type 2 diabetes and depression to a diabetes educator and also to a mental health coach, who helped them find ways to deal with the stresses and challenges in their lives. They had an average of three visits with the mental health coach.

After three months, the patients' anxiety and depression scores fell by an average of 49 percent, and their A1C levels dropped from an average of

8.8 percent to 7.7 percent.

"The program was to be piloted for a two-year period but has been so powerful [that] we have continued it," Melissa Herman, R.D., diabetes educator and program director of the Diabetes & Nutrition Education Center of FirstHealth of the Carolinas, said in an association news release. "While healthy coping is an essential part of diabetes education, mental health coaching takes it to another level for people who struggle with depression. Those who had mental health coaching said it was life-changing, lifesaving and helped them feel better and happier than they had in a long time," she added.

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