

## An Exploration of the Experiences of People Living With Diabetic Foot Ulcers: A Qualitative Study

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of people with diabetic foot ulcers in Thailand.

**Methods:** A descriptive qualitative design was used. Purposive sampling was applied for recruiting participants at the outpatient diabetes clinic at a large teaching hospital in northern Thailand. A semi-structured interview guide was used to conduct in-depth interviews with 13 participants from January to April 2017. Thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework was used to analyse the data and identify the experiences of people who are living with diabetic foot ulcers.

**Results:** The findings from this study identified two main themes and five sub-themes for each theme. The first theme related to living with the consequences of diabetic foot ulcers. The sub-themes were: less energy and mobility, negative mental impact, lifestyle change, blood glucose fluctuations, and "Phlong" and "Thum Jai" (Mobilising personal coping strategies). The second theme related to managing diabetic foot ulcers. The sub-themes included: modern wound care, complimentary wound care, protecting the feet, managing diet, and receiving social support. The findings from this research can support health care providers to understand the lived experiences of people with diabetic foot ulcers so that they can help individuals to manage and control blood glucose levels and provide appropriate instructions on wound and foot care.

**Conclusion:** Understanding the experiences of people with diabetic foot ulcers is valuable for health care providers so that they can provide appropriate health care advice and assist individuals to maximise their quality of life. This study provides knowledge on how individuals with diabetic foot ulcer struggle to change their diet and provides insights into the reality of daily foot care for people with diabetic foot ulcers. Application of this new knowledge can assist health care providers to reduce diabetes complications and promote a better quality of life for people with diabetic foot ulcers and diabetes more generally.

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**Title:**

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**Keywords:**

Diabetic foot ulcer, Thailand and lived experience

**References:**

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#### **Abstract Summary:**

This qualitative study explored the experiences of people living with a diabetic foot ulcer. The findings provide an understanding of how people with DFUs experience and endure the realities of having a DFU including their experiences of undertaking daily foot care.

#### **Content Outline:**

Diabetic foot ulcers (DFUs) are a severe complication of diabetes mellitus due to uncontrolled blood glucose levels and peripheral nerve damage (Chin, Liang, Wang, Hsu, & Huang, 2014). People with poor glycaemic control are at high risk to develop DFUs (Abbas, Lutale, Bakker, Baker, & Archibald, 2011). DFUs may result in permanent disability due to wound infections that require amputation (Bradbury & Price, 2011). Therefore, having a DFU has a significant impact on the quality of life and lived experiences of individuals (Siersma et al., 2017). In the Thai context, there are many factors that impact diabetes management such as religion, belief, and culture (Lundberg & Thrakul, 2012, 2013; Sethabouppha & Kane, 2005). These factors impact on how people with DFUs manage their diet and blood glucose levels. There is limited literature exploring the experiences of people with a DFU in specific ethnic groups.

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**Author Summary:** Saneh Khunkaew has completed his master degree from Malardaren University, Sweden. At the moment, he is doing a doctoral degree at the University of Wollongong, School of Nursing, NSW, Australia. He is an expert on diabetic foot care. His passion is to develop the quality of life and patient outcome among people with diabetes type 2 and its complications. Also he is interested in the mixed methods design in nursing research.