# From Patient to Educator in Diabetes Care

Becky Sulik has transformed her personal journey with type 1 diabetes into a lifelong commitment to patient education and research. Now a registered dietitian and certified diabetes care and education specialist, she underscores the importance of preserving insulin production and advancing clinical trials as essential steps in changing the future of diabetes care.

**Becky Sulik**
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## A Diagnosis That Inspired a Career

Becky's career choice was shaped by her own type 1 diabetes diagnosis at age 15, when she entered a life-threatening diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). At that time, she received only basic instructions on insulin and food restrictions. It was not until years later, when she met a diabetes educator, that she learned about managing diabetes and received realistic guidance on nutrition.

"The diabetes educator taught me how to use a Multiple Daily Injections regimen, count carbohydrates, and adjust my doses. I felt very empowered by her and her support," Sulik recalls.

**DIABETES KETOACIDOSIS (DKA)**
DKA occurs when the body lacks insulin and begins breaking down fat too quickly, releasing ketones into the bloodstream. High ketone levels make the blood acidic and cause severe dehydration, creating a medical emergency that can be fatal without treatment.

## The Power of Education

That moment of empowerment became the model for how Becky approaches her own patients today when helping newly diagnosed children and families with type 1 diabetes. Through her experience she has seen how even small amounts of preserved insulin production can make a significant difference in managing the disease.

"We often use formulas to estimate insulin needs, but knowing whether a patient is still producing insulin helps explain changes and highlights the value of therapies that can extend this function," Sulik explains.

## Why Preserving Insulin Matters

For Becky, developing therapies that extend insulin production is especially important, particularly during the "honeymoon" period, the early stage after diagnosis when the pancreas still makes some insulin and blood glucose levels are easier to manage. Supporting the body's own insulin production at this stage can reduce variability in glucose management and make daily life less burdensome.

"If I had a chance to have even part of my honeymoon period back, I would gladly do it because of how much less variability there is due to a softer impact of the variables that affect blood glucose and insulin need," Sulik reflects.

## The Role of Clinical Trials

Patients and families are often introduced to clinical trials as a way to access emerging therapies and contribute to progress in care. In these situations, trust in their care teams is essential, along with the hope of benefiting themselves or supporting future advances. Practical support, such as access to diabetes technology and education, also helps remove barriers related to time, cost, or inconvenience.

"Living with type 1 diabetes since my teens, I have benefited from previous research trials with the approval of many new medications, devices, and improved understanding—as have millions of others with T1D," Sulik explains.