

DIABETES: a brave woman

Sandria Loy talks frankly about her journey back to good health after confronting the miseries and embarrassments of diabetes in middle age. Her story is one of courage and determination to conquer a condition that can seriously affect your feet, your sight, your heart – even your life.

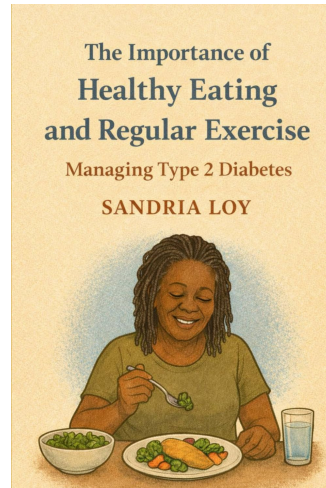
That was Sandria's worst childhood fear. Her parents had a friend Sam whose mother died of diabetes: it started with her eyes. Eventually she went blind. Then she lost her legs: poor circulation meant both had to be amputated below the knee. Sadly, Sam's life followed the same tragic path.

"At 12 years old I associated diabetes with something deadly," Sandria said, "something that could rob you of your dignity, your independence – and eventually your life."

Sandria, a former nurse, felt the first symptoms when she was 51. The first sign was unbearable vaginal itching, accompanied by excessive thirst. Then she started dizzy spells so severe that she had to be blue lighted to hospital. When a paramedic measured her blood sugar, she panicked. "No, I am not diabetic," she told him confidently. Her result registered 105 – off the scale imedically.

However, she was determined she would bring her condition under control. She started cooking more carefully, moderating her heavy carbohydrate diet and eating more fibre, more fish, less meat. She also started taking exercise; nothing draconian, just regular walking and building strength. And it worked.

Within eight months, she came down from 19.5 stone to 12. Her



Sandria's books

There are 3 titles available on [Amazon](#)

- [Reversing My Type 2 Diabetes. £5.99](#)
- [The Importance of Healthy Eating, £7.99](#)
- [Bright Bites: Diabetes Friendly Recipes, £8.99](#)

'How I reversed my Type 2'

Sandria Loy is working with surgery staff to tell folk: you can conquer this disease

blood sugar reading she reduced to 35, a remarkable achievement.

Then came the hard part: sustaining her new regimen. Fortunately, by then she had contacted the people and services offered by her GP surgery. Sandria is a patient at the Firs, a practice linked to Addison Road. She met the two social prescribers, Roisin Reilly and Sue Kofi, who put her in touch with a local support group for people with diabetes. They asked her to come along and talk to the group about her recovery: a daunting prospect for someone not used to public speaking.

Her anxiety was unnecessary: the group applauded her loudly. "It felt incredible to know that my

story resonated with them," she said. She still attends, meetings regularly. "They give me a lot of support. It's important, too, to appreciate you're not the only one going through this struggle."

One health professional stands out for Sandria: Alex Kyriakidis, the wellbeing coach who works at both the Firs and Addison Road. "She was a constant source of support and encouragement to me," said Sandria. "She helped me unpack a lot of unresolved feelings – anger, betrayal, rejection. The transformation was not just physical; it was emotional and spatial. I was healing from the inside out."

Neil Levis

and a bad luck story

'Steroids started my insulin troubles'

Michael Shevelew recounts the unusual circumstances that led to his diagnosis

In 2011 I was afflicted with a mystery condition: pains in my legs radiating up into my back. Initially, I thought it might be something external, such as poorly fitting shoes; but as the symptoms grew more severe, I found myself at A&E.

The medics were somewhat baffled. They posited a number of possibilities, but none were conclusive. A lumbar puncture ruled out Guillain-Barre syndrome (an auto-immune disorder which attacks peripheral nerves); other tests could not solve the problem.

Eventually, a rheumatologist determined to give me three infusions of prednisolone, a powerful steroid, over three nights. The treatment had a positive effect: the crippling pains in my legs subsided, and I began to recover.

Soon after, I was diagnosed with Churg-Strauss syndrome, another auto-immune condition affecting the blood vessels in my legs and feet. My treatment was akin to cancer chemotherapy.

After a time, I noticed that I was needing to pee far more frequently than usual. At my next treatment at Whipps Cross, I mentioned this to the

nurses. I was immediately referred to a diabetes nurse, who tested me and confirmed that I had steroid-induced diabetes.

I had ever heard of this condition. I asked if it was like gestational diabetes and would reverse once I stopped the prednisolone. I was told that this might be the case, but I was not given any absolute prognosis.

More than a decade later, I am still diabetic. I take a combination of three tablets daily and have a fairly restricted diet, avoiding carbohydrates and eating mainly protein and vegetables or salad. I have not, to the best of my knowledge, had either a hypo or hyper attack and I have lost around 11 kilos of weight in the past couple of years.

I am still hopeful of reversing the condition, as I have enough other underlying conditions to make eliminating one of them a pleasant thought. I have regular monitoring check-ups at Addison Road and have generally found them to be thorough and conducted very professionally.

While I'm not thrilled that I still have diabetes, the care I get seems to help me keep it under control, for which I'm very grateful.

Was this US patient's group 'corrupt'?

THE most shocking thing about America is to realise that of its 340 million people, 100 million of them have diabetes or pre-diabetes and that 100,000 people die each year from the condition.

The second jolt to your understanding of normality is to learn that the America Diabetes Association, the organisation working on behalf of those 100 million sufferers, was two years ago accused of recommending unhealthy food to members.

It was alleged that the association was so in hoc to big food companies who paid it to promote their products, that it was recommending food with artificial sweeteners despite the association's own literature advising that such products could cause type 2 diabetes.

Matters came to a head in early 2024, when Elizabeth Hanna, the associations chief nutritionist, was threatened with legal action when she blew the whistle, but the sheer settled so the case never came to court.

You can read more about this remarkable story [here](#) and [here](#)

Diabetes Awareness Week

June 9-15

Walk round Olympic Park
Thursday June 11 at 11am

[Book here](#)

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