

Transitional Care Unit: Gateway To Better Care

Authors: Agnes Low, Hassan Akhoond, Kunjal Desai, Shalini Desai

What is The Transitional Care Unit?

The Transition Care Unit (TCU) is a clinical environment for patients who have recently started dialysis. Designed as a 4 week-program, the goal of the TCU is to provide a venue for patient engagement, psycho-social and emotional support, education, and comprehensive renal management. Nurses identify barriers to learning and support patient engagement, resilience, and skill development through various innovative solutions. Members of the multidisciplinary team will work with our diverse group of patients and families to discuss individualized plans of care tailored to their needs and goals. Patients and caregivers will receive education, training and practice self-care activities related to independent dialysis throughout this 4-week model of care. The team will explore different renal replacement treatment options with patients with the goal of promoting independence and better quality of life on dialysis. At the end of the 4 weeks, patients will transition to an independent dialysis modality or in-facility dialysis depending on the patient's individual goals, abilities, and life circumstance.

The Journey

Week 1

- The patient will meet and get to know the different members of the TCU team (nurses, social worker, pharmacist and dietician). Our goal is to provide the patient and their family with the support and information they need to help reduce the stress and uncertainty they may have with starting dialysis
- The nurse and kidney doctor will monitor the patients symptoms, laboratory results, effectiveness of medications, and dialysis treatment to give them regular updates on their progress and response to dialysis
- Each team member will provide them with information on how to best care for their health and wellbeing while on dialysis

Week 2

- The team will continue to support the patients learning so they can make informed decisions about their health care choices
- Transition care unit nurses to review the different treatment options available to them: Peritoneal Dialysis, Home Hemodialysis, and In-Centre or Self-Care Hemodialysis
- The nurse will also help the patient and their family better understand their treatment options and review the benefits of each type of dialysis based on their individual circumstances and life goals
- The nurses discusses with the patients of TCU and will review the different types of dialysis accesses (dialysis line, fistula, or graft) and help them choose the type of dialysis access that best meets their needs, goals, lifestyles and care goals

Week 3 & 4

- Around the 4-week mark, the patient may have an idea of what type of dialysis best suits their lifestyle. If they are still uncertain, the nurse, kidney doctor, and the Independent Dialysis Coordinator (IDC) will help navigate you in the right direction

If you choose a type of **Home Hemodialysis**, you will initiate training in TCU or transition into our Home Dialysis Unit

If you prefer the **Self-Care Clinic**, we will help you arrange a clinic visit and interview with the self-care team

Living Donor Transplant Workup

If you choose **In-Centre Dialysis**, you will transition to either the Wilson or Church site dialysis unit

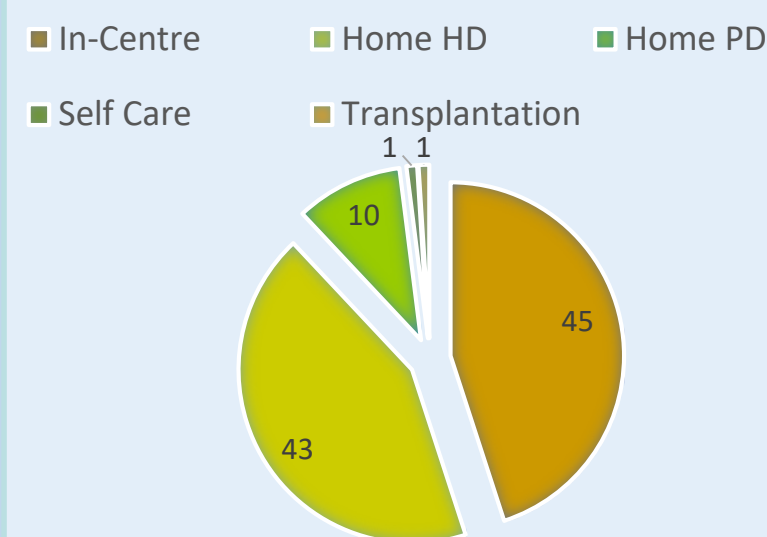
Building Patient Resilience & Capacity

Dialysis initiation is associated with increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Rubio, Asencio, & Raventos, 2017). The effect of these symptoms result in a loss of independence, self-efficacy, and isolation. Through targeted psychological interventions, patients regain a sense of hope and resilience which facilitates their learning, engagement, and participation in self-care activities. The TCU care model combines medical hemodialysis care along side specialized emotional and psychological support to empower patients and families at the start of their dialysis journey.

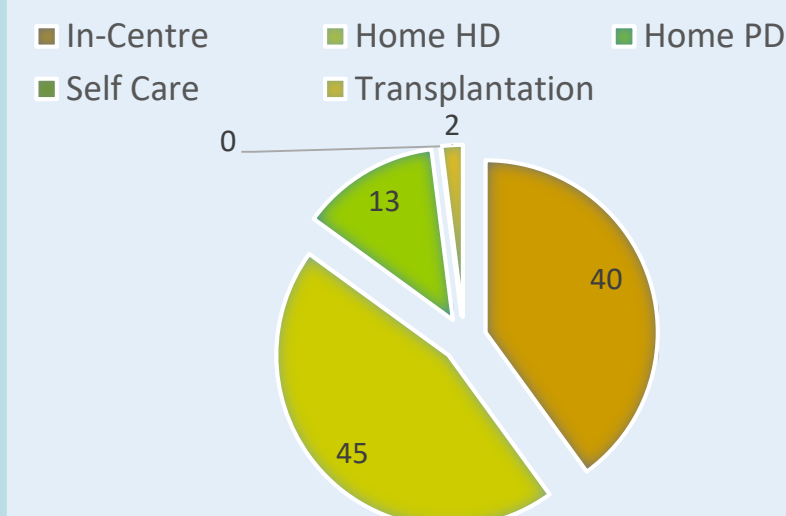
Outcomes

The TCU model of care has proven to increase then uptake of home dialysis, patient engagement and satisfaction, and reduced negative health outcomes such as hospital admissions and failure to cope in new dialysis patients.

% OF PATIENTS WHO MOVED FROM TCU 2018



% OF PATIENTS WHO MOVED FROM TCU 2019



Patient Testimonies about TCU

"I came into TCU in pain, nervous and scared. But the support that I received in the center helped me get through. All the nurses believed in me, they encouraged me, and they supported me. And although the social worker is there I think patients could benefit from more mental support. Patients struggle with this disease and the mental strain it causes, you can put up a straight face but inside is a battle. They helped and taught me so much. I AM forever grateful for my TCU nurses."

-TCU Graduate

"After 2 years of waiting to be on the Nxstage machine. I would say it's worth the wait. I am thrilled and thankful for the care I received at TCU. I was able to learn how put in my own sharp needles and it was a privilege to be the first successful Nxstage patient."

- TCU Nxstage Graduate

"I started on July 2/2019, going in on the first day I didn't know what to expect from treatments. The nurses made it easy to understand and comfortable. Going into my second month I feel much better then I did before treatments started, I also made good friends too."

- TCU Patient

"My stay at the Transition Care Unit at Humber River Hospital has been ideal for me while I got used to my rapidly changing world. The nurses gave me the support I needed while I sorted out the real from the surreal of life on dialysis. They tolerated my grumpy days. They supported me to become a confident, self sufficient dialysis patient at home. I go back sometimes just to visit. They give great hugs."

- TCU Graduate

"We noticed a high level of anxiety and depression in patients starting dialysis therapy. Hence we developed a Transitional Care Unit, for patients starting dialysis. Aside from providing the usual medical care, there is an added focus on the psycho-social needs of the patients, with careful monitoring of their emotional state and reasoning abilities. We don't just deliver a physical treatment. We expand it, providing the empathy and emotional support needed during this difficult transition."

- Dr. G. Hercz