

Promoting Self-Management: Addressing the Educational Needs of New Hemodialysis Patients

Richard Sawatzky, Ph.D¹; Jill Hidalgo, RN²; Christine Watson, RN²; Tanya Choy, RD²; Leilani Borja, RN²; Prachi Khanna¹

¹University of British Columbia, ²Providence Health Care



INTRODUCTION

Patients with end-stage renal disease face many physiological and emotional challenges as they go through the treatment plan and lifestyle changes. **Pre-dialysis education plays a key role in helping patients adjust to their kidney disease and adhere to treatment** (Moattari et al., 2012; Parvan et al. 2015). Education programs are designed by clinicians with the goal to address patient needs. However, there is little evidence that shows patient involvement in the development of effective educational programs for new hemodialysis patients. The objectives of this study were (i) to investigate the educational needs of patients from their point of view and, (ii) to obtain patient and nurse clinician perspectives on facilitators and inhibitors of implementing an effective education program to promote self-management in new hemodialysis patients.

METHODS

Setting: This study was conducted at Providence Health Care – St. Pauls' Hospital (SPH) Hemodialysis unit located within the hospital and situated in an urban location. The **renal team at SPH** is comprised of doctors, nurses, dialysis technicians, social workers, dietitians, pharmacists and clerical staff who provide care to both inpatient (acute) and outpatient (chronic) dialysis patients.

Design: Qualitative research design using the interpretive description approach.

Procedures: Collected demographic data, focus groups, and interviews of Research Participants.

SAMPLE

Patients: 8 patients who spoke English, over 19 years of age, and new to dialysis within the last 6 months.

Nurse Clinicians: 9 Registered Nurses with varying levels of experience on dialysis, and of diverse, age, gender and cultural background.

Clinical Nurse Leaders: 2 male Clinical Nurse Leaders with over 10 years of working with managing staff and coordinating care for hemodialysis patients.

FINDINGS

PATIENT PERSPECTIVES

Patient-Identified Learning Needs

- Explanations about kidney disease, how hemodialysis (HD machine) works, complications during HD and after treatment, lab results, medications received during dialysis, different treatment modalities
- Information about transportation to and from dialysis
- Information about social services– emotional and financial resources, home support and childcare options

Patient Preferred Modes of Education Delivery

- One-on-one interactions
- Written summary of key information
- Orientation at the beginning of dialysis (15-minute explanation of machine and dialysis routine)

"An orientation at the beginning of dialysis, consisting of a 15 minute explanation of how the machine works would have been helpful and also an explanation of what is happening in general" – Patient

Facilitators of Patient Education

- Previous education prior to dialysis (Kidney Care Clinic resources – book, pamphlet, one on one interactions with health care team)
- Positive interactions with and access to health care team
- Orientation by a nurse– Pre-HD Care package
- Renal team member Introductions
- Competent and well-trained registered nurses (including novice HD nurses)
- Supportive, caring and knowledgeable care team members

Barriers to Patient Education

- Overwhelming amount of information, especially written information included in educational material
- Lack of information regarding process and procedures during HD treatment
- Lack of meaningful interaction with staff and lack of privacy during treatment
- Limited nature of conversation with providers during dialysis treatment (cannot have in-depth conversation and lack of privacy)
- Lack of continuity of care (different nurse at every treatment)
- Unclear about which doctor is most responsible for their care

NURSE CLINICIAN PERSPECTIVES

Facilitators to Patient Education

- Dedicated nurse to educate patients
- Nurse continuing education on different patient education topics
- Standardized patient education topics/content

"It's not only the patient that can be educated. It's also us." – Nurse Clinician

Barriers to Patient Education

- Increasing nursing workload, short staffing and competing nursing responsibilities
- Nurses' learning gaps (i.e. renal diet, transplant, vascular access, Kidney Care Clinic)
- Lack of confidence in providing patient education
- Lack of standardized teaching material
- Reduced ability/readiness to learn among patients
- Lack of dedicated patient educator due to budgetary limitations

CLINICAL NURSE LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES

Facilitators to Patient Education

- Establishing rapport and using humor
- Adapting teaching methods based on patients' learning style
- Introducing patients to a peer mentor/advocate
- Assigning experienced nurses to new patients
- Supportive, accessible, and knowledgeable interdisciplinary health care team

"I can try to set up the environment on the floor to be suitable for learning, but if I don't have the staff it is not going to be, really, all that helpful" – Clinical Nurse Leader

Barriers to Patient Education

- Lack of funding, competing nursing priorities and staffing issues
- Patient's uremic condition hinders patient ability to retain information

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

- Nurse clinicians and CNLs feel patient education is most effective when delivered in a **standardized format with concise content tailored to the learning needs** of the patient. Nurse clinicians recognize their role in delivering patient education to new dialysis patients and highlighted the importance of **continuing education** in various patient education topics in order to **address their own learning gaps**, learn from other health care professionals, and **gain confidence** in teaching patients.
- All participants noted that having a **dedicated patient educator** would facilitate effective delivery of patient education. In the absence of a dedicated patient educator, CNLs suggest providing **one-on-one patient education** the first three HD runs, assigning **senior nurses** who have more experience caring for new patients, and introducing new patients to a **peer mentor/support** on the unit.
- Identified themes will assist the health care team to better support hemodialysis patients with their learning needs and **promote self-management on hemodialysis**. In the future, the findings could also be used towards a **follow-up research project** wherein a structured patient education program can be developed and piloted in the Hemodialysis Unit at SPH.

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