

Summary: Planetary Health Conversation Circle with BC Renal Patient Partners

A conversation circle with BC Renal patient partners was held on January 30, 2026. Twelve participants attended, with representation from all health authority renal programs and bringing lived and living experiences of all kidney care modalities (KCC, PD, HHD, HD, and kidney transplant), as well as experience with BC Renal committees or key activities.

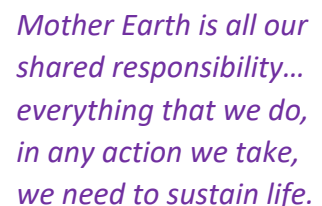
Overall, participants felt strongly about embracing environmentally sustainable kidney care for better planetary health—they all wanted to minimize any environmental impacts. They demonstrated courage, openness and vulnerability in their sharing. While offering ideas to advance environmentally sustainable kidney care, they highlighted the importance of mindful, tailored approaches to embed environmental sustainability into routine care and practices, and to communicate with the broader patient population in BC.

Further details of the discussions, guided by three questions, are summarized below:

What comes to mind when you hear ‘planetary health’, and ‘environmentally sustainable kidney care’?

Interconnectedness & shared responsibility

- The Earth sustains human life, and thus humans must care for the Earth.
- Caring for the planet is important, because healthy planet takes good care of all people.
- Planetary health and human health are becoming “synonymous.”
- Responsibility to care for “Mother Earth” lies with everyone—patients, providers, health systems, and society.



Mother Earth is all our shared responsibility... everything that we do, in any action we take, we need to sustain life.

‘Planetary health’ is a large, overwhelming concept—both individual and system-level action needed

- Individuals and renal programs can reduce, reuse, and recycle—small things, big impacts—everything adds up.
- The term implies big system changes for meaningful impacts.

- International efforts will need to combine ideas and commitment to have the best possible impacts on planetary health, e.g., international standards for dialysis practices.

It's such a huge ball, absolutely such a big concept to consider... but there are smaller things we can do as individuals and very big tasks that need collective effort.

Concerns about patient safety vs. sustainability

- There is fear that some environmental initiatives (e.g., reuse of dialyzers for cost-saving) could compromise patient safety.
- Safety needs to be a priority, while considering 'reduce, reuse and recycle', as well as the most cost-effective option in the clinical context.

We can't do environmental sustainability at the expense of patient care.

Lack of awareness

- Many participants have never discussed environmental impact with their GP, nephrologist or other care team members.
- Public and patient awareness about planetary health remains low.
- Planetary health wasn't part of the consideration in individual decision-making about treatment options.

Prevention as core to planetary health

- CKD prevention reduces environmental burden.
- Early detection and delayed progression of CKD are crucial.

How do you think your kidney care affects the environment—positively or negatively?

Negative Impacts

- Resource-intensive treatments
 - Dialysis machines require significant electricity, water, and disposables.
 - Drug manufacturing involves high-energy clean labs, materials, and water.
 - There is a lack of transparency around the making of drugs, and their impacts on the environment.
- Large volumes of waste from dialysis
 - Waste includes single-use plastics, packaging, syringes, lines, and filters.
 - Hospital settings produce exceptional levels of waste.
- Shipping and delivery impacts for home dialysis
 - Frequent courier deliveries increase environmental impacts.
 - Oversized and excessive amount of packaging results in excessive amount of waste.

My biggest problem is the waste. The amount of packaging and deliveries—it's shocking.

- Water samples shipped across the country instead of regionally tested can be investigated with the vendor to explore an alternate, more sustainable option.

Positive Impacts

- Home dialysis
 - Home dialysis reduces travel emissions
 - It involves less commuting to hospital.
 - It offers greater control over scheduling delivery frequency (reducing transport).
 - By closely monitoring the expiry dates, a participant on HHD was able to reduce supply shipment frequency (i.e., from 12x/ year to 6x/ year).
 - There is enhanced ability to recycle more at home, e.g., cardboard, plastics, and wrapping can be recycled.
 - A participant mentioned that there is personal energy saved for meaningful activity: Some patients can reallocate their energy toward environmental and community work that are meaningful to them.
 - Home dialysis options are more efficient and cost-effective than dialysis at hospital.
- In-centre HD: There are more projects showing how waste can be reduced, e.g., IV Iron Push initiative with no need for IV mini-bag, and poles.
- Kidney transplantation (relative to dialysis)
 - Kidney transplantation is considered the least resource-intensive treatment overall.
 - The treatment option still generates waste (e.g., medication packaging).

Being at home saves travel emissions and saves my energy for things that help the environment.

Emotional Impacts

Listening to all of this reinforces the guilty feelings I have being on dialysis and seeing the impact it has on the planet.

- Guilt about environmental footprint
 - Patients often feel personal responsibility for waste they generate.
 - There is concern about burden placed on individuals vs. system-level accountability.
 - Patients shouldn't feel bad for the care they need or the responsibility to take on the guilt.
- Not all treatment options are appropriate for everyone, even though they might like to opt for more environmentally sustainable options.

We don't want people to feel bad they're receiving life-sustaining treatment—yet we want to make the planet healthier.

What changes could make kidney care more environmentally sustainable while still meeting patient needs?

Communication & Education

- Integrate environmental information into modality discussions:
 - Currently, there is no planetary health information to guide decision-making at the individual care level.
 - It would be helpful to include simple explanations of each therapy’s environmental footprint, i.e., how each option impacts planetary health.
 - It is important to present information that is both positive and appealing to the patients early and consistently, without inducing guilt.
- Enhance awareness of environment impacts of kidney care by starting from the basics with the intention to save the future would be helpful.
- Tailored messaging via various approaches
 - Storytelling can be an effective technique to employ in raising awareness.
 - Brief sustainability messages could be added into resources for patients (e.g., dialysis brochures, PD training video) and clinicians (e.g., nursing talking points). For example, a section on “How can I help with the environment?” with ‘green’ tips could be added to existing patient brochures.
 - Recycling guides with tips for what can and cannot be recycled could be a helpful tool for patients receiving home dialysis.
 - Talking points for nurses and other clinicians could be developed to guide more effective communications with patients and their families regarding sustainability considerations.
- Use existing networks and webinars to strengthen knowledge sharing.
- Build competency among nephrologists, nurses, pharmacists, and other clinicians so they can inform patients accurately.

People are living in their own little world... there needs to be awareness of what's really happening with planetary health.

Include environmental impact as one simple bullet point in brochures and training—patients will notice.

There’s no discussion with my healthcare team about how treatments impact the environment. The choice of treatment impacts the environment, and there’s nothing really there to give patients that idea, and to even know that drugs take a lot of resources to make.

Prevention and early detection

- Increase ACR (albumin-to-creatinine) and kidney function screening for those at risk of CKD in primary care.
- Public campaigns like other chronic disease organizations (Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada, Diabetes Canada) could also enhance awareness of CKD.
- Widen the use of drugs that slow kidney disease progression (e.g., SGLT-2) based on evidence.

Prevention doesn't just help the planet—it helps people live healthier lives. Being able to mobilize, advocate, and share our stories has always been a passion of mine... That's where I see us having the greatest impact. For me, the health of the planet and our own health are becoming truly synonymous.

Clinical & Care Pathway Changes

- Home dialysis training
 - Patients can take the initiative to learn what can and cannot be recycled.
 - It may be too much for some patients to sort their waste, especially at the beginning of their treatment journey.
 - After they are settled with the treatment, they may have more energy to learn and start sorting dialysis waste.
 - Provide nurses with precise communication strategies or talking points about environmental sustainability.
- Enhance kidney transplant access
 - Reduce barriers for living donors (e.g., income support during recovery).
 - Provide environmental sustainability messaging for potential kidney donors and their employers.
 - View transplant as an environmentally preferable therapy when clinically appropriate.
- Incorporate plant-based dietary guidance: Plant-based diets are both kidney-friendly (with guidance) and environmentally friendly.

The best environmental solution is prevention and transplant—these are the low-hanging fruit.

System Collaboration and Improvements

- It would be helpful to have a provincial committee/ working group that focuses on planetary health and puts forward ambitious initiatives by supporting collaboration across BC Renal committees to impact beyond current borders.
- BC Renal has done well with using virtual meetings to reduce emissions.
- It is important to avoid overburdening individual patients with responsibility by emphasizing shared system accountability.

Procurement and vendor management

- Reduce unnecessary packaging & deliveries by:
 - Consolidating shipments, and mitigating shipping errors (e.g., ordering a case of dialysis filters resulted in receiving a single filter with excessive packaging).
 - Ensuring proper ordering to prevent waste.
- Support local testing (e.g., water samples) to eliminate long-distance shipment.
- Advocate for transparency in environmental impact of medications and supplies.
- Improve procurement, e.g., push suppliers toward reduced packaging and greener practices.

Next step

The suggestions and feedback gathered from this conversation circle will be used to inform the implementation of the BC Renal Planetary Health Strategy and related activities going forward. They will also be used to develop appropriate communications materials concerning planetary health and environmentally sustainable kidney care for people living with or at risk of CKD in BC.