

How patients who need hemodialysis cope with the pressure

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Introduction:

Hemodialysis (HD) with a common name of “kidney wash” is a therapy for patients with renal failure. During the past decades, it has been improved greatly in facilities and techniques. Renal failure is a condition required a long-term treatment. In the treatment course, the patient faces pressures at different levels, and the difficulties in coping with the medical condition. The patient’s condition also brings impacts on other family members. The first step when facing the patients is to recognize their psychological status. Besides, properly practicing professional interpersonal skills is also an important lesson and big challenge of being a nursing staff, which of course require the supports of patient’s family and friends. I would like to share my experience in working in the field of hemodialysis for more than ten years, from the perspectives of the patient’s psychological problem. Any feeling of being lost may cause the following reactions:

1. Shock → Denial Stage

Patients in need of hemodialysis usually know that they have a medical condition, but they do not think the situation is bad enough for them to have hemodialysis. During the denial phase, the blood test results show obvious elevation in blood urea nitrogen level and out-of-normal-range creatinine. In addition, patients experience body weight loss, decreased hemoglobin and mild pulmonary edema. The conditions could deteriorate and impact on patients’ family if not receiving proper treatment.

Comment:

Facing the problem together to gain the understanding and supports when making the first step of hemodialysis.

2. Depression → Feeling of helpless

Patients often feel that they won’t live a long life with their family after they have been treated by hemodialysis. Actually, with advanced and well-developed medical techniques, artificial kidneys are now very sophisticated and function just like natural ones. As long as patients follow the diet instructions from doctors and nurses, the quality of life should improve. Keeping in mind that family is the reason for living well is critical to maintain health with hemodialysis.

Comment:

Facing the problem coming along with hemodialysis, and resolving the patient’s wonderings and concerns. The patient’s feeling of uncertain could be improved by asking questions.

3. Anxiety → Fear

Patients usually feel anxious about possible dialysis machine malfunction, if nurses are not well-trained to perform hemodialysis for them, if there is something wrong in the circuits or drainage system, if there is water/electricity outage during the dialysis. In fact, patients' concerns sometimes are too overwhelming and not necessary. The dialysis machines are closely monitored and maintained on a regular basis. We have also installed a security system to ensure smooth operations. If there is power/water outage for a prolonged time period, the independent power generator and the fire station upon being informed would immediately take care of power and water problems, respectively. All nurses working in the station are professional and well-trained, so patient don't need to worry.

Comment:

Understanding the process of the dialysis in the hospital and the quality of the nurses in a professional level will secure patients and reduce the fear and anxiety.

4. Sadness → Low self-esteem

Some patients are young and unmarried when they are treated by hemodialysis and are pessimistic about the future. These single young patients are encouraged to apply for kidney transplant. Despite the rare availability of donated kidneys, there is still hope as long as the possibility of rejection can be excluded by medical exams. Furthermore, patients can regard hemodialysis as just another job that has to be done except it is not paid. In this way, with their otherwise normal life, stable income, they are still entitled to enjoy romantic life as healthy people. If patients are highly interested in finding a partner, they are encouraged to participate in dating activities organized by specialized singles clubs.

Comment:

Nurses could be friends **with** patients to face problem together, and to establish confidence and new concept of value in the life while struggling in the difficulties, which will bring patients positive impacts.

5. Shame → Feeling guilty

Many patients are unwilling to reveal they are on hemodialysis to their relatives and friends because of the fear that those people would guess they must have been an evildoer in their previous life so are paying a moral debt in this current life. The big needles not only hurt them physically but also emotionally and sometimes patients cannot stand the thought themselves. It has to be made clear that they are not the only ones who get sick. Everybody gets sick from time to time. Hemodialysis is only a way to treat sickness, and no one knows who will need the treatment in the future. The suffering is not linked to previous lives. Even if patients still assume it is linked somehow, let them know that they have to be hold strong to get through the treatment so that the "debt" can be paid off and their mind would be more peaceful afterwards.

Comment:

Hemodialysis is the truth that the patient couldn't turn his back on. How to face it is more

important.

6. Acceptation → Discussion

If patients are in doubt about the effectiveness of dialysis functions of the artificial kidneys it is appropriate to explain to them the standard relationship between their physical conditions, such as uremia status body weight, and the choice of the artificial kidney from various models. They also can be briefed about blood test results, showing effectiveness in removing toxic substances. If patients still found the uremia smell in their urine, they should be given access to consult with their doctors about further treatments.

Comment:

Self-acceptance, and involves in the decisions of treatment to improve the condition, which gains better results in the disease management and quality of health care.

Conclusion:

Experiencing physical disabilities, frustrations and difficulties, such as those described above, are frequently present in the course of life; and they are not only limited to patients on hemodialysis, but are also common for normal people. Patients on hemodialysis are so unfortunately but are also so lucky! It could be the biggest challenge in their life. Could they fight for it and win? In addition to the patient's ability in cope with the disease, supports and assistance from others also play an important role. I hope that all health care providers could help those patients in time, and make sure that they would receive the best care during the long way of treatment, which are the honors, and responsibilities of all nurses.

Patients! Have you been through all the psychological phases mentioned above? Open your heart, and let's work together for a better tomorrow!