



AMERICAN NEPHROLOGY NURSES' ASSOCIATION
ANNA'S 44TH NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
APRIL 21-24, 2013
RIO ALL-SUITE HOTEL, LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

**Spirituality and its Effect on Quality of Life: the Lived Experience of ESRD Patients
on Maintenance Hemodialysis**

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With the increasing prevalence rate of End-Stage Renal Disease and rapid growth of the number of patients on maintenance hemodialysis, there is a need not only for cost effective care, but also for a care that addresses the quality of life of dialysis patients. Dialysis patients are faced daily with the complexities of their disease and living a life on dialysis, of which coping mechanisms are necessary not only to survive, but to maintain quality of life. Studies have shown spirituality has a positive effect on the quality of life of patients with chronic illness, but little is known as to its effect on the quality of life of dialysis patients. The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study was to explore spirituality as a coping mechanism of ESRD patients and how it affects their quality of life while on maintenance hemodialysis. A purposive sampling was done and eight participants from an out patient hemodialysis dialysis clinic gave consent to participate in the study. Approval from Institutional Review Board was obtained. After written consent from participants, face to face interviews were done in the site of their choice for comfort and ease in answering semi-structured questions to explore perception of life on hemodialysis, ways of coping, understanding of spirituality, and quality of life while on hemodialysis. Interviews were audio-taped and ran from 30-45 minutes in length. Transcripts of interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed line by line by primary investigator. An RN committee member reviewed transcripts and concurred that themes developed flowed from their content. In order to have a better understanding of participants' reflections on spirituality, it was beneficial to explore their perception of life while on dialysis and how they coped with these perceptions. A phenomenological method of data analysis was utilized to interpret the findings. Participants' answers revealed that however one perceived life on hemodialysis, a corresponding coping skill is developed. Their understanding of the meaning of spirituality revealed that spirituality is defined in different ways. Themes emerging in this study revealed that spirituality translates to self-empowerment through belief system, relationships and service to others which has positive effect on the participants' quality of life. With these findings disseminated to dialysis caregivers, staff can be more equipped in delivering holistic nephrology care to patients through evaluation of current assessment practice on spirituality as a means to cope with life on hemodialysis. Knowing that patients define spirituality in different ways, and that each understanding is a way of coping, dialysis staff can create a plan of care that is individualized, comprehensive with outcomes that could possibly achieve sustainable quality of life while on maintenance hemodialysis.

Abstract selected for presentation at ANNA's 44th National Symposium, Las Vegas, NV, 2013