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Support Groups for Hemodialysis Patients in the Waiting Room Before Hemodialysis Treatment

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Background: For patients with CKD stages 4-5 the preparation for dialysis therapy and the beginning phase of the actual treatment is a very stressful situation. This new treatment poses several challenges for both the patient and his/her family, including body image perception, sexual function impairment, and physical limitations and psychological stress (Cloues, 2003). During this stressful stage, the patients tend to forget the information they received from the multidisciplinary team in the pre-dialysis clinic.

Objectives: 1. Ease the entrance of new patients to hemodialysis treatment. 2. Empower the old patients. 3. Increase patient's compliance. 4. Ventilation

Methods: We initiated Open Support Groups for the patients in the waiting room before their dialysis treatment. In the groups we had newcomers and old patients at the same time. Each meeting lasted an hour. The facilitators of the group were two Nephrology Nurses from the units. The themes of the meetings were the different ways the patients cope with the illness and the treatment (ESRD and its medical implications, diet limitations, psychosocial problems, family issues etc.).

Results: 1. Older patients' experiences had a significant positive influence on the new patients' acceptance of their new status as hemodialysis patients. 2. The participants were very happy with the initiative which enabled them to share their feelings. 3. The opportunity to talk about the daily routine of the unit was very important. 4. The rating of their satisfaction questionnaire was higher following the sessions.

Conclusion/Application to practice: Active theme-oriented group meetings with patients increases patients' satisfaction and ability to cope with the chronic CKD illness.

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