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**Age and Dialysis Technology**

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**The Issue:** Dialysis in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is presenting unique challenges for the renal nurse. Ageing of the population, co morbidities, and dialysis longevity are just some of these. In Australia there is a real impetus to promote the uptake of home dialysis to: reduce costs to the healthcare system, reduce the load on dialysis units, and to promote more control by the patient of their health.

**Discussion:** The push for home dialysis (or satellite dialysis) presents technological and educational opportunities for the renal nurse. Technological developments in relation to the dialysis machines have made major inroads to the maintenance of safety for the patients during dialysis sessions, and ease of operation for the renal nurses.

It is said that there is a discrepancy between the older and younger generations use of available technology. With the younger generation being more proficient in the use of technology. The average age of the new dialysis patient in Australia is 60.7 years with the majority of new patients being between 70-79 years. Compared to this the average age of the clinical nurse in Australia is 44 years with the majority of nurses in the 50-54 age groups. However 45% of Australian nurses are aged in the 30-45 age groups.

Therefore the different characteristics of the dominant generations of Australian renal nurses and dialysis patients impact on the education of patients in readiness for home dialysis modalities. For example, Generation X and Y are very technologically competent and have different personal characteristics and work expectations than the Baby Boomer generation. This has implications for patient education in relation to the more sophisticated and computerized systems for dialysis.

The Australian renal nursing environment will need to adapt these 'generational changes' to recruit and retain well educated renal nurses. Some of these adaptations would include an environment which fosters creativity and innovation; the availability of good technology available; the integration of social media into the workplace; and the use of smart phones as a support system for education and training of both renal nurse and dialysis patient.

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