

POSTER 18

THE EXPERIENCE OF INITIATING AND BEING ON DIALYSIS AMONG THE ELDERLY

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Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a disease that requires extreme treatment measures to ensure survival for the patients it afflicts. These measures include dialysis and/or kidney transplantation. Since 1973, the federal government has paid for treatment of chronic kidney disease, and in 1973 only 341,000 people were receiving treatment. However, it is estimated that by 2030 the number of people receiving treatment for CKD will be 2 million. People over 80 years of age are the fastest-growing population of patients with CKD Stage 5 who are initiating dialysis currently. Despite this rapid growth in the prevalence of CKD, little is known about how dialysis affects patients psychosocially. Age alone does not measure a person's ability to survive and benefit from dialysis; thus, more information on how the elderly experience life after initiating dialysis is critical to obtain in order to guide physicians and patients in their decisions of whether or not to initiate dialysis. Therefore, we studied how elderly patients experience both the transition to dialysis and life while on dialysis by interviewing a sample of those elderly patients across mid-Missouri. We found common themes among the patients' experiences of dialysis. These data and themes can be used by physicians to improve the transition to dialysis for their patients as well as to possibly improve the patients' experiences of dialysis and quality of life while on dialysis.