

INTRODUCTION

Developments in the field of Nephrology and the growth in different forms of Renal Replacement Therapy (RRT) have been significant over the last 30 years.

It could appear that life has become easier for our patients and their families and that their lives are better than before. But despite the improvements in renal care and technology, which provide more adequate and effective RRT, many problems still remain. People with renal failure present a variety of problems and needs which affect their quality of life.

The Nephrology Nurse is vital to the total care of these individuals. The very complexities of Renal Failure require the delivery of care to meet a wide variety of physical, social and psychological needs.

It is necessary for Nephrology Nurses to acquire knowledge and develop skills which enable them to manage the resulting health problems of Renal Failure, both for the persons themselves, their significant others and for the community.

THE PATIENT

“The patient, whether as an individual or as part of a family or group, has multiple needs. These needs vary with the characteristics of the patient, the state of health/illness and the setting in which care is delivered. Needs may be of a psychological, physical and/or social nature, with dynamic interaction between and within these areas” (Bergman, 1983:185)

The person suffering from Renal Failure frequently requires a range of long term nursing care from rehabilitation following Acute Renal Failure through to continuous support and management in Chronic and End Stage Renal Failure.

For the individual with Renal Failure during the different phases of his/her illness, the optimal team of nurse-patient-family will be the basis for the promotion and development of the best strategies to cope with the disease and, in consequence, to achieve a better quality of life. These strategies will be implemented with the support of other multidisciplinary team care professionals.

THE NEPHROLOGY NURSE

The Nephrology Nurse *“is a professional practitioner who possesses sufficient knowledge in delivering health care to individuals with renal failure who may be at any stage of the therapeutic continuum”* (Baer, 1979)

He or she will:

- Ø Be committed to providing the highest possible quality care to patients and their families. Special emphasis is placed on support, education, prevention of complications and rehabilitation to encourage patients towards independence and self-care. The EDTNA/ERCA provides a framework within which such care can be achieved.
- Ø Be a member of the multidisciplinary team and act as patient’s advocate within that team.

- Ø Be a clinical expert in Nephrology Nursing Care, contributing positively to meeting the needs of communities as a skilled, accountable member of the health care team whose main concern is to ensure the patients' dignity, beliefs, values and cultural background.
- Ø Intervene as consultant, researcher, change agent and teacher in such a way that, by integrating his/her clinical skills, knowledge in research, management and teaching, will promote improvement in quality both in the life of the individuals with Renal Failure and care delivery of health services.

AREAS OF PRACTICE

The Nephrology Nurse may be required to practise in a variety of care settings:

- Haemodialysis Centres
- Peritoneal Dialysis Units
- Transplant Units
- Acute Wards
- Community Nephrology Services
- Outpatient Departments
- Intensive Care Units
- Holiday Haemodialysis Centres

As well as providing expertise in Nursing Schools, Public Health Services and Nursing Homes

CONTINUOUS EDUCATION

The Nephrology Nurse:

- Must be aware of continuing development in fields of nursing technical and medical care, relevant to the total needs of the person with Renal Failure.
- Must be committed to continuous education and training co-operation in scientific projects and continuous quality improvement in order to achieve the best development in Nephrology Nursing Care.
- Should seek opportunities for post basic education on specialist Nephrology Nursing Courses. It is recommended that such courses are based on the EDTNA/ERCA Core Curriculum
- Should seek opportunities to undertake own research to implement evidence based practice and to participate in clinical audit.

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