

Exploring information practices of renal patients: A way to develop effective patient education strategies

Ann Bonner ¹

A. Lloyd ²

¹ Queensland University of Technology, School of Nursing & Midwifery, Brisbane, Australia

² Charles Sturt University, School of Information Studies, Wagga Wagga, Australia

Background: One goal for people with end-stage kidney disease (ESKD) is to establish the foundations of positive self-care attitudes and practices. By gaining knowledge of their disease and how it is treated, people become active participants in their health care management. Little, however, is known about the information sources and practices of people with ESKD.

Objectives: To understand how people with ESKD experience the information environment and what information practices they employ in order to inform the decisions they make in relation to treatment and care.

Methods: Using a constructivist methodology five people with ESKD from two regional renal units were recruited. They were all receiving haemodialysis and had been on dialysis between 6 months and 21 years. Data was collected using in-depth interviews and thematically analysed.

Results: The analysis revealed two types of patients. The first type appears to adopt a 'received' view of information, and will not question their condition; they passively accepted the information provided predominantly provided by the nephrologist. In the other type, patients were found to be 'engaged'; they actively identified their information needs and quickly learned what that they needed to ask and who to ask. Their information sources were wider and included a number of renal health practitioners, written educational material, and other patients. Engaged patients viewed the nurse as an experienced practitioner and deliberately sought advice from them.

Application to Practice: Knowing the information practices of renal patients, particularly the variety of information sources used is particularly useful for renal nurses when planning, implementing and evaluating patient educational strategies.