

UNDERSTANDING END OF LIFE CARE AND IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH PATIENTS UNDERGOING DIALYSIS

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BACKGROUND

In 2016, 945,663 haemodialysis procedures were performed in our country for 6,739 patients, and for the first time, the percentage of patients older than 60 exceeded 70%. Overall patient mortality reached 18%. A system of palliative care has recently been implemented for patients in a chronic dialysis programme. A palliative approach would not inevitably lead to withdrawal but could provide a transition to this option for a selected patients undergoing maintenance dialysis and could alleviate the suffering of such patients.

The attending personnel attempt to respect the autonomy of the patient regarding their dignity, spiritual needs, and values. Communication between staff and patients is of paramount importance in this approach.

OBJECTIVE

Evaluate the patient's attitudes to the treatment and illness in the chronic dialysis programme, including the willingness to participate actively in the treatment process.

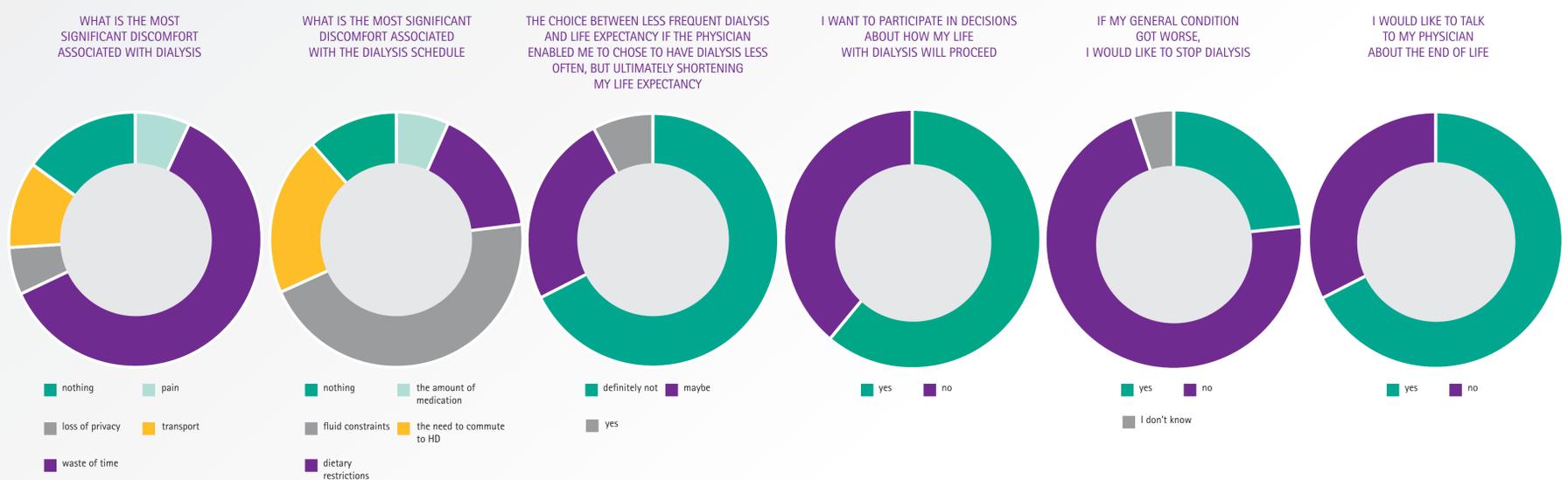
METHOD

In our study, we present the results of a questionnaire used to evaluate end-of-life care preferences of dialysis patients.

We monitored the patients' age and total time spent on dialysis. We ask the patient what issues they are most concerned about when on dialysis, their adherence to the schedule, whether the patient wants to get involved in the decision-making process on how life with dialysis should proceed, whether the patient has the desire to terminate the dialysis in the case of major deterioration of health, whether the patient wishes to talk to a doctor about this topic, and whether the patient prefers a lower frequency of dialysis at the cost of a shorter life expectancy.

RESULTS

A total of 77 patients in two dialysis centres responded to the questionnaire. There was an average age of 72.5 and 62 years (48-88 years); a total dialysis time of 4.7 years (3 months - 25 years).



CONCLUSION

The outcomes of the survey brought a number of important insights into the opinions and attitudes of dialysis patients with respect to the issues of living with dialysis, posing challenging questions for the patients. The results of the survey enabled us to gain insight into the issues of patients in a chronic dialysis programme from their own perspective.

Most patients and their loved ones are interested in talking to the doctor about the prognosis and treatment options of the terminal stage of a chronic illness and expect that this dialogue will be initiated by the physician. Effective communication can facilitate the development of a comprehensive treatment plan that is in line with medical principles and the wishes and values of the patient.

We will continue to work with the outcomes of the questionnaire survey especially in training courses for healthcare professionals focused on effective patient communication.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The patient should be able to express their opinion on further management and treatment. A simple and clear questionnaire can provide staff with a basic overview of the patient's views of the issue.