

Experiences of living with end-stage renal disease prior to a kidney transplantation

I.Villadsen^{1,2}, R. Birkelund³, J. Henriksen², A. Norlyk¹

1 Section for Nursing, Department of Public Health, Aarhus University, 2 VIA Nursing, VIA Faculty of Health Sciences, 3 Lillebaelt Hospital, Vejle & Institute of Regional Health Research, University of Southern Denmark.

Background

Renal transplantation is a well-established treatment for end-stage renal disease. The prevalence of end-stage renal patients in Denmark is increasing. Simultaneously, kidney transplantations with a living donor increase. However, patients experience challenging existential aspects as well as physical complications concerning kidney transplantation.

Aim

The aim of this study is to investigate the experiences of patients living with end-stage renal disease prior to a kidney transplantation with a living donor.

Method

The study has a qualitative approach inspired by Ricoeur. Nine individual interviews with patients living with end-stage renal disease are conducted 7-14 days before a planned kidney transplantation with a living donor. Analysis and interpretation are based on Ricoeur's theory of interpretation.



Findings

The preliminary findings show that patients with end-stage renal disease experience living with an invisible condition with no outward signs of their illness and existential contractions. The perception of the body are divided in subjective feelings in accordance with their feelings of illness, but at the same time, the patients are objectifying their body in numbers regarding the function of the kidneys. Receiving a kidney from a living donor are perceived as the greatest gift in life, but the patients are simultaneously worrying about consequences for the donor after the transplantation. Furthermore, the patients are facing the unknown prior to a kidney transplantation. Accordingly, they are taking one day at a time, but still they have hope regarding having their life back.

Perspectives

This study is conducted to increase the knowledge of the experiences of individuals living with end stage renal disease. Hereby, the results articulate the need for support from health professionals prior to a kidney transplantation. The interviews will be repeated with the same patients approx. 1/2 year after the kidney transplantation to explore the needs of rehabilitation after a kidney transplant.

“I hope I will have my life back.”
“It is a gift more worth than the most expensive diamond. Still, my primary worries relates to my donor.”