

Palliative Care for Patients with End-Stage Renal Disease

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The dialysis population has been growing progressively older. The incidence rates of End-stage renal disease (ESRD) are highest in patients 75 years old and older, and they continue to rise in this group. Older patients survive the shortest period of time on dialysis, and they withdraw from dialysis significantly more often than younger patients. In this period, they can need for palliative care.

The goal of palliative care is to relieve suffering and to support the best possible quality of life for patients and their families, regardless of their stage of disease or the need for other therapies, in accordance with their values and preferences.

Patients with ESRD face numerous threats to physical and emotional well-being from the time of diagnosis. Patients particularly individuals treated with dialysis, require active treatment to sustain life. They live with the knowledge that their survival depends on a machine and viable dialysis access. These patients also experience a multitude of symptoms as a result of renal disease and its treatment. Fatigue is often the most prevalent symptom reported. Other symptoms that occur with regularity include itching, headache, sleep disturbance, cramps, pain, shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, restless legs, numbness in the extremities, and muscle weakness.

ESRD and its treatment necessitate sweeping changes in lifestyle that impact every aspect of life and challenge the ability of patients and families to maintain an acceptable QOL. Patients with ESRD would benefit from a palliative care program that includes symptom management, advance care planning, psychosocial and spiritual support.

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<https://www.asn-online.org/education/distancelearning/curricula/onco/Chapter19.pdf>

<http://www.who.int/cancer/palliative/definition/en/>