

Management of Chronic Kidney Disease (excerpt from longer document)

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Patient Engagement (Upgrade to Pro Version to Remove the Watermark)

Preparing and Educating Patients



Kidney disease requires continuous monitoring and management by both healthcare professionals and the patient. Providing comprehensive care can be challenging, especially because other chronic health conditions are often present at the same time. Patients can have difficulty accepting the diagnosis of a chronic and progressive disease like CKD, and must deal with the prospect of a limited lifespan and much time and energy devoted to self care. Your role as a licensed healthcare professional involves not only providing skilled care, but also patient education and support.

Kidney disease care requires repeat clinic visits and a high level of patient involvement. While this can be overwhelming, evidence suggests that patients managing a chronic disease will have improved health behaviors and status when educated about self-management⁹. Your efforts to engage patients early can help them adjust and become involved in their care from the start.

Encourage Advanced Planning

The reality of chronic kidney disease can be grim for new patients. It is a progressive illness with irreversible physical damage and a risk for premature death. Despite the inevitable challenges, patients will have better outcomes when they are well-informed and engaged at an early stage¹.

Encourage patients to plan in advance for the later and more progressive stages. Even if they have mild symptoms for a period of time and have been getting proper treatment, further progression of the disease is inevitable. Patients may feel some anxiety when talking about their future and the reality of declining health. Depression is common among patients with chronic diseases and is often overlooked by healthcare providers who are typically focused on physical care⁶.

Increase Awareness of all Treatment Options

Early-stage care options involve lifestyle changes and planning. However, many of these are manageable recommendations that the general population follow as well. As a patient's disease progresses, these early self-management habits will still be important, but more intensive treatments will be added. Even in the earliest stage of CKD, it's never too soon to discuss options for kidney failure⁹. As a licensed healthcare provider, you are responsible for leading this discussion with the patient. Conversations might require the assistance of the multi-disciplinary care team to ensure that the patient's physical, mental, and spiritual needs are met.

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Planning for kidney failure can be a difficult process for patients. As they face the limits of their lifespan, these discussions with care providers and loved ones can be emotional and meaningful. Typical treatment choices aim to take over filtration function of the kidneys. These options include hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, and kidney transplant. Conservative management is a fourth option and does not replace dialysis, but manages the patient's symptoms and preserves kidney function for as long as possible²².

Palliative and Hospice Care

The burden of CKD and kidney failure can be heavy for patients to bear²². Palliative and hospice care can provide comfort and support at the end stages of kidney failure. Palliative care can provide ongoing pain management and comfort to patients who are undergoing other treatments like dialysis or a kidney transplant. Hospice care is typically an end-of-life care option. Patients often have a poor understanding of these options. You need to initiate this vital discussion with each patient to make sure everyone on the care team understands their choices and goals²³.