



# E-platform launches to help kidney patients through exercise and support

■ online support ■ exercise ■ wellbeing ■ mental health

In a bold move to help the kidney community manage their physical and mental health through lockdown and beyond, experts from King's College Hospital, London, have developed a free, online service. Kidney Beam has a choice of live and recorded classes led by NHS kidney professionals and other qualified instructors, some who are themselves living well with kidney disease.

Offering a broad range of movement sessions—including yoga, pilates and high intensity training (HIIT) classes—the platform also provides expert advice videos on topics such as sleep, mindfulness and social isolation, as well as art therapy classes.

Funding from Kidney Research UK will enable the team from Beam and King's College Hospital to test the platform over the next few months, and we hope the data collected will enable the team to secure further funding to continue.

Here, the team involved tell us more about this new exciting platform.

'When the team from King's College Hospital asked us to support this pilot, we could see the enormous potential of the project, and were delighted to respond

quickly,' explains Sandra Currie, chief executive of Kidney Research UK. 'Right now, it is more important than ever to give kidney patients options to keep moving and explore new ways of maintaining good mental health.

'We know that keeping active makes us feel good, but when you're living with a long-term condition like kidney disease, it's not always easy. Kidney Beam gives patients the chance to take control of their mental and physical wellbeing at their own pace, with guidance (if needed), from people who understand the complexities of kidney health.'

The online workout platform is hosted by specialist kidney professionals, from renal physiotherapists to renal counsellors, from a number of different NHS trusts and backgrounds, as well as people living with kidney disease. It has broad appeal—it is aimed at anyone over 16, with any ability, any kidney condition and at any stage of kidney disease.

All classes have a fitness rating so patients can choose the right one for them. At the beginning and end of the classes, people can chat to each other and the instructors, building friendships that might help them stay motivated.

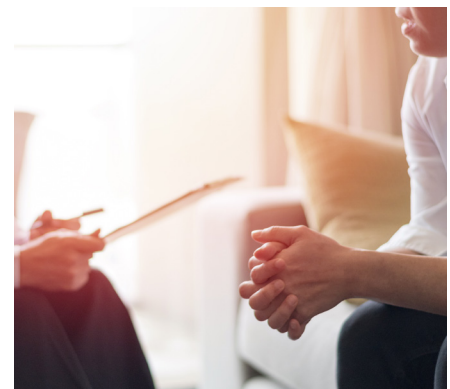
With free, open access, patients anywhere can sign up to the service without a referral being needed from their doctor or consultant, although clinicians are asked to encourage patients to use the resource. Previously, clinician recommendations proved to be very effective in recruiting patients to the platform when it was developed for people with cystic fibrosis.

'We think Kidney Beam will give patients

an easy, fun way to improve their health,' said Sandra. 'And the more people who join, the more evidence we will have to help secure the platform's future to benefit all.'

Sharlene Greenwood, consultant physiotherapist in renal and exercise rehabilitation at King's College Hospital, leads the team that have brought the UK-wide force together. She explains how Kidney Beam was developed.

During lockdown, I became increasingly worried about my patients with kidney disease who were shielding at home. There were real concerns about physical and mental wellbeing, and many patients reported that they missed coming to the renal rehab classes offered at King's College Hospital and having that interaction with people. At the time, I was also working on the frontline and seeing many patients with kidney disease who had been admitted to hospital with COVID-19. The rehabilitation needs for this patient group was very apparent.



**The platform is hosted by specialist kidney professionals, from renal physiotherapists to renal counsellors**

**Rosie Loft**

Communications Manager,  
Kidney Research UK

Email: [rosieloft@kidneyresearchuk.org](mailto:rosieloft@kidneyresearchuk.org)

**Sandra Currie**

Chief Executive, Kidney Research UK

**Sharlene Greenwood**

President, British Renal Society

© 2020 MA Healthcare Ltd





The online service has a range of exercise classes available for kidney patients, including yoga and pilates

I began to try and work out how I may be able to deliver something online for patients. This led me to re-connect with an old colleague and friend who had developed Beam for cystic fibrosis, an online intervention designed to improve mood with movement. Pamela Scarborough and Katie Bell developed Beam for cystic fibrosis a couple of years ago, and now have people with cystic fibrosis from across the globe accessing online movement classes. When I got in touch with Pamela and Katie, the team at Beam were eager to help me develop Kidney Beam.

Dr Joe Chilcot, a health psychology researcher, and I began to explore how we could develop a platform that helped people with kidney disease move more, and also helped people improve their mental health. Unlike other long-term health conditions, people with kidney disease do not get routine access to physical and mental health interventions. Kidney Beam is an opportunity to connect with people from across the UK and across the globe, bringing a much-needed resource for people with kidney disease into their own homes.

Expert clinicians from the UK Kidney Research Consortium exercise and lifestyle clinical study group, along with others from across the kidney community, have rallied together to provide on-demand and live

classes. The platform has been designed for all kidney patients, and therefore offers lots of different levels and content, allowing people to choose options that suit them best. All the instructors are either people living with kidney disease, or experts working in the condition. This means that everything on offer on the platform is tailored specifically for people living with kidney disease.

The platform is intended for the whole kidney community, including the wider family unit, carers and healthcare professionals working in the condition. The next 6 months will allow us to shape the Kidney Beam platform with feedback from users and secure funding to extend the project for a further year to collect data around health and cost-effectiveness. This will allow us to then approach the NHS to commission the service at the end of that project.

My career vision has always been to see routine physical and mental wellbeing interventions offered to all patients with kidney disease, regardless of location and situation. Kidney Beam is an excellent opportunity to realise that vision and bring something novel and exciting to the kidney community at a time when it is most needed.

Safa Mustafa has polycystic kidney disease (PKD). She was among the first kidney patients to give Kidney Beam a try.

'I am very active (when I get the chance). I used to do HIIT but felt it caused more pain in my kidneys due to my PKD, so now I take part in low impact sports. I need to be careful of the danger of bursting cysts.

'Kidney Beam is amazing; I love the online classes and will definitely be promoting it to the local community. So far, I've tried out one of the pilates classes, which was a great way to do stretches. I love the fact that it is online, it's so easy to use and you can do it at a time that suits you.

'I will be using this in future, as it will help to work round my daily routine. I can do in the comfort of my own home. I don't like going to the gym as I like to exercise at my own pace, and, with this, I can.'

Stuart Smith had kidney problems in childhood and his kidneys eventually failed at the age of 26. He is now approaching the 25th anniversary of his kidney transplant. He thinks Kidney Beam will be good for people's physical and mental health.

'I am up and running on the site and have tried out the keep moving classes. I think my quad muscles have just woken up after a long break, but it's all good.

'Tennis was always my go-to exercise, but because of arthritis weight gain from mental health problems it has stopped me playing. My mental health is much better, and now, post-therapy, I am managing my own condition well. One of the reasons I stopped going to the gym was just being wiped out after work, as well as always picking up infections and viruses.

'Lack of motivation and coronavirus has stopped me from getting back into tennis. So I have reset my goals for next year, with the hope that Kidney Beam will help me along the way.

'In my last job, I was on my feet constantly in a hot warehouse; it was not good for my health at all. I believe finding a part-time job more suitable to my condition and doing some exercise alongside, without being too tired will help me maintain my independence, as well as my all-round health.'

To sign up or find out more, visit [www.beamfeelgood.com](http://www.beamfeelgood.com). **JKC**