

Exercise during dialysis as part of routine care

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Introduction

The benefits of exercise during dialysis to support patients to live well with kidney disease are increasingly recognised, however it is not yet integrated into routine care.

In 2018 this unit participated in the successful PEDAL study looking at the effects of exercising on dialysis. On completion it became evident that several patients were extremely keen to continue with an exercise programme on dialysis to maintain the positive benefits on their mobility and strength. However it was a year before the programme was re-established.

Purpose

Following discussion with the consultant team 6 dialysis technicians were trained by the in house educator to support those patients who felt strongly that they wished to continue to exercise on dialysis.

Training included;

- Programming of the MONARK cycle ergometer
- Safety
- Contraindications to exercise training
- Pre-exercise assessment and instructions
- Monitoring during exercise
- Post exercise checks

Design

At the start patients were asked to identify their goals which helped the team to better understand what individuals wanted to achieve.

Each patient self-assessed their frailty using the Rockwood Clinical Frailty Score before and after an 8 week exercise programme and commented on their strength and mobility.

Patients exercised 3 times/week during haemodialysis. After at least 30 minutes of haemodialysis had elapsed.

Patients were supervised during their exercise session with routine monitoring including blood glucose monitoring for our diabetic patients.

Findings

8 patients continued with exercise on dialysis; 4 male and 4 female. 5 patients were diabetic. Age ranged from 50 – 93 years and the average age was 72 years. Their average time on haemodialysis was 5 and a half years ranging from 2 – 13 years.

Distance covered ranged from 2 – 15km each dialysis session taking 5 – 30 minutes.

Patients reported improved muscle strength and walking distance. In addition frailty scores improved with the majority improving by 1 level and 1 patient reporting an improvement from 5 (mildly frail) to 3 (managing well)

“I can now walk around the hospital without having to stop and sit down. When out shopping I can shop for longer without getting too tired. It seems to have had a beneficial effect on my lungs and breathing”

Feedback from a patient.

Conclusion

This on-going programme clearly demonstrates the benefits of supporting an increasing number of patients to exercise on dialysis as part of routine care. It highlighted to the team the possibility of supporting more

patients from our units to benefit from this easily implemented and very much wanted exercise programme.

The translation of exercise during dialysis from research to routine care is very relevant to all the renal community.