

COPING WITH KIDNEY FAILURE

Late-night dialysis a boon to patients

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HEALTH WRITER

FOR THE past three years since being diagnosed with kidney failure, Rebecca Arendse, 58, of Parow has had to juggle three sessions of dialysis a week and 12-hour shifts at work as well as find time for her family.

The Red Cross Children's Hospital assistant nurse would either miss her dialysis sessions so she could catch up with family, or have to work night-shifts to make up her hours.

"Because of the guilt I feel for being away from my children or work I sometimes skip my dialysis sessions. I know that missing sessions is not

good for my health... I often get ill as a result, but what can I do? I'm trying to find balance in life. Spending six hours in hospital three times a week and still going to work afterwards is very tough," she said.

But Arendse, who receives her dialysis treatment at Melomed Gatesville Hospital, has been given the option of having her dialysis overnight - giving her time to work normal shift hours and spend time with her loved ones.

From yesterday the hospital introduced its 24-hour dialysis service - giving its working patients an option to have their sessions after hours. It is the only renal unit to offer the services on a 24-hour basis in the province.



NIGHT WATCH
Nurse Sheila September assists Sydney Ncate with dialysis
PICTURE: TRACEY ADAMS

It is not only convenient for patients, but makes it possible for the hospital's renal unit to offer nocturnal hemodialysis. This is when dialysis is done over a longer period - about 8 hours - to get a better clearance of toxins in the blood stream.

While most patients did well with the standard four-hour dialysis, the hospital's nephrologist, Craig Arendse, said some patients needed to be dialysed for much longer. Medical evidence suggested that the longer patients were dialysed the better the outcome. This form of dialysis was also associated with fewer side-effects and higher survival rates.

"By having a 24-hour unit we will be

able to accommodate these patients who can sometimes be underdialysed on the four-hour programme. Many of these patients struggle with the normal dialysis because of its aggressiveness on the body. The shorter the dialysis is the more aggressive it is on the body. Most patients cannot work after dialysis as it can leave you very exhausted," he said.

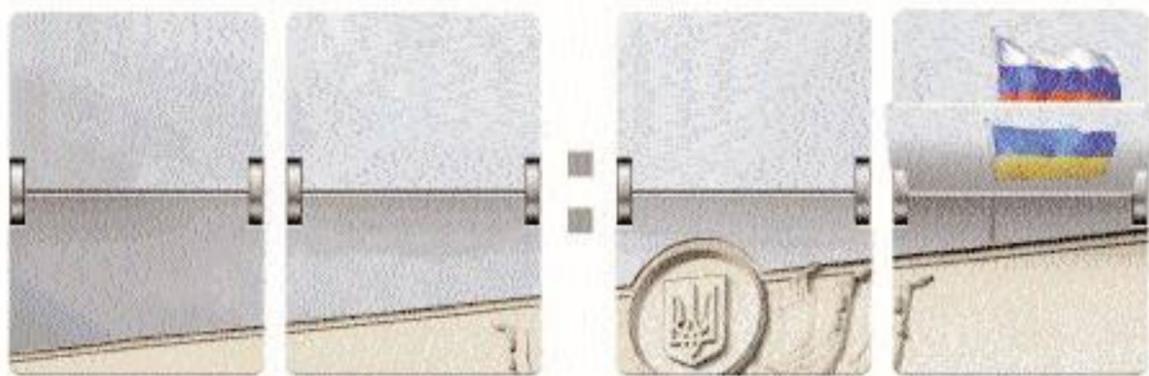
As nocturnal dialysis was considered gentler due to slower blood flow in the body, many patients were able to sleep throughout the procedure, allowing them time to rest. Patients also didn't feel the "washed out" feeling so they didn't need to take a nap after treatment.

Randal Pedro, the hospital spokesman, said the service would most benefit the working-class patients who often ended up losing income due to kidney failure.

As many of them needed to be away from work for three days, some ended up being boarded or earning according to reduced hours they worked.

"Many of these patients are breadwinners for their household and cannot afford to be off work to obtain their dialysis treatment. Through the 24-hour service they won't have to miss their treatment sessions, and can still be at work the following day," he said.

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