**New frontiers: establishing an outpatient Occupational Therapy service on a dialysis unit**

**Background**

Symptoms associated with kidney disease can lead to significant functional deterioration, resulting in recurrent and extended hospital admissions (Cook & Jassal, 2008). Additionally, increasing populations with long-term conditions add pressure to an already stretched healthcare service (MacNeill et al., 2016). The British Renal Society (2002) advocates for integrated and co-ordinated care across the renal pathway to meet the increasing complexities of patients.

**Project**

A service evaluation was completed screening for unmet Occupational Therapy needs in a haemodialysis unit. Following this, a successful business case was submitted resulting in the recruitment of a new band 6 Occupational Therapist.

**Implementation**

An outpatient Occupational Therapy service was implemented on the unit. The new service offered individual therapy assessments and interventions with an emphasis on using meaningful occupations, as well as group relaxation sessions. Education was provided to staff and 86 referrals were received from a variety of professions.

**Discussion**

Outcomes suggest that Occupational Therapists have a unique role in managing renal patients in a holistic way; addressing functional, psychological, environmental and social concerns. Case examples have shown that Occupational Therapy interventions have increased patient’s tolerance of dialysis treatment improving their medical observations and enabling them to stay on the machines longer. By providing continuity of care across the renal pathway, patient rapport is improved and potential problems are able to be pre-empted and addressed prior to reaching a crisis point. Both patient and staff feedback has been positive and acknowledged that the added value of Occupational Therapy has improved patient care.

Cook, W.L., Jassal, S.V. (2008) Functional dependencies among the elderly on hemodialysis, Kidney International, 73, pp. 1289-1295.

MacNeill, S.J., Casula, A., Shaw, C. , Castledine, C. (2016) UK renal registry 18th annual report: chapter 2 UK renal replacement therapy prevalence in 2014: national and centre-specific analyses, *Nephron,* 132 (suppl1), pp. 41-68.

British Renal Society (2002) *The renal team: a multi-professional renal workforce plan for adults and children with renal disease. Available from:* <http://www.britishrenal.org/Workforce-Planning/2002-Previous-Work.aspx>[Accessed 14/08/2016].