

DIETARY EDUCATION FOR HAEMODIALYSIS NURSES – IS IT EFFECTIVE?

B Reasbeck, J Pinnell
Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital

PROBLEM: Timely dietetic advice is an important part of the treatment plan for all patients on haemodialysis. Good multi-disciplinary working is needed for this to occur but can be hampered by lack of time, resources and knowledge. Informal dietary education sessions for haemodialysis nurses have been run on an ad-hoc basis for several years. Uptake was good and feedback received, by means of evaluation forms, was positive. However, the effectiveness of the education had not been formally measured.

PURPOSE: To assess the effectiveness of the education sessions, to identify whether knowledge was retained and determine future training needs.

DESIGN: Eight Grade D nurses were invited to attend four one-hour education sessions, one per week over a four week period. The topics were 'General Introduction to Diet', 'Potassium', 'Fluid Control' and 'Phosphate Control'. A voluntary questionnaire, including multiple-choice and open questions, was given to each nurse at the start of the first session (pre), the end of the final session (post) and 89 months later (follow-up). Evaluation forms requesting individual feedback were issued at the end of each session. Questionnaires were marked against a 'correctly completed' version. Only totally complete answers were scored as correct. Further analysis was undertaken of partially correct answers.

FINDINGS: All the nurses attended all four of the education sessions and completed the full set of questionnaires. Due to time constraints on the unit the length of each session was cut from 1 hour to approximately 30-45 minutes. Post-education questionnaires showed the nurses dietary knowledge increased for all 16 questions, with an increase in fully correct answers from pre = 20% to post =58%. Analysis of the follow-up questionnaires indicated retention of knowledge varied considerably between nurses, topic and question. Overall there was a reduction in fully correct answers over the 89 months period to 36%. 6 of the 8 nurses filled in evaluation forms. They had all valued the sessions and requested further training to allow for more discussion and updating.

CONCLUSION: The dietary education sessions were well attended, well received and were effective at increasing short-term knowledge. Longer-term knowledge retention was variable. This indicates a need for continuing education and support, which was also requested by the nurses.

RELEVANCE: We aim to continue providing dietary education on the unit. We plan to establish a rolling programme which, as well as being effective in increasing dietary knowledge, is workable on a busy unit, facilitates knowledge retention and ultimately improves patient care. We hope to extend this training to other members of the multi-disciplinary team and to utilise and develop I.T. as a resource tool.