

IMPLEMENTING AND EVALUATING THE EXPERT PATIENT PROGRAMME (EPP) IN RENAL CARE

N Thomas, K Sandhu, P Simpson, S Woodcock
St Helier Hospital, Carshalton, Surrey

Introduction: The Expert Patients Programme (EPP) is an NHS-based training programme that provides opportunities to people who live with long-term chronic conditions to develop new skills to manage their condition better on a day-to-day basis. Expert patient programmes take place over two hours per week for six weeks and are led by people who, themselves, live with a long-term health condition.

Method: An EPP programme specifically for those with renal disease was developed by a tertiary renal unit, in liaison with local and national kidney patient associations, one of the local PCTs, a consultant in patient and public involvement, and support from the London Renal Modernisation Team. Two working groups were formed: one to develop the timing and content of the programme, the other to develop staff awareness. Both working groups were involved in advertising and evaluating the programme.

Progress: The programme has been planned to commence in early 2005. It is hoped that there will be twelve participants on the first programme, who are either receiving haemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis, or have had a transplant. The first programme will be facilitated by outside instructors, but in the future it is hoped that patients with renal disease will themselves become facilitators. The content of the programme will be adapted slightly from the original chronic disease self-management course (CDSMC) which provided the original framework for the EPP, because of the very specific needs that renal disease brings. Evaluation will be ongoing.

Conclusion: The aim is for patients to feel confident and in control of their lives, and to effectively manage their condition in partnership with health care professionals. The EPP is one among a range of new policies and initiatives to modernise the NHS. By implementing this programme, patients will be provided with the necessary 'self-management' skills, so they can make a tangible impact on their disease and quality of life.