Psychological support service for people with renal disease

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This leaflet explains what the Renal Psychological Support Service is, what difficulties we can help you with and how you can be referred to this service.

What we do?

Psychology is the study of how people think, feel and behave. Psychologists often work in the health service and are trained to help people with emotional or behavioural problems. They offer a range of practical problem solving and coping techniques, as well as psychological therapy.

Our team consists of clinical and counselling psychologists. We are all registered members of the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC). Psychologists, unlike psychiatrists, are not medical doctors and do not prescribe medication or examine your body. It is a common belief that clinical psychologists only work with people who have mental health problems, but this is not the case. We also specialise in helping people cope with and adjust to the emotional stresses and strains that can accompany serious physical illness.

How do we help people with renal disease?

Living with renal disease can have a significant impact on your life. Everyone who experiences a problem with their kidneys will face their own individual issues and challenges. Some people find it a difficult experience dealing with the physical, emotional and financial consequences of a chronic illness. You may have worries about treatment options, about the future, about traumatic events surrounding the diagnosis or about some aspect of being investigated and treated within renal services. You may have decisions to make or questions to ask. Sometimes other problems not directly related to your kidney disease may affect how you deal with it (e.g. longer term stress, anxiety or mood problems).
We can help people with a range of issues including:

- coping with illness or disability
- making decisions about treatment
- coping with symptoms or side effects of treatment
- finding self-management difficult (e.g. taking medication, diet or fluid restriction)
- fears related to medical procedures, needles etc
- coping with how having a serious illness affects your relationships
- managing the demands of home and family life while caring for yourself
- not feeling like doing anything
- feelings of depression, anxiety and anger
- feeling unhappy about the way you look/ changes in body image
- worrying about your health or the future
- sexual problems resulting from your illness or treatment
- coping with adjustment, change and loss
- coping with how having a serious illness affects self-esteem and sense of self

Some people find it difficult to adjust to what is happening to them. Some people cope well with their illness but then find particular things more difficult to cope with.

These are understandable and normal reactions and we can help you to understand your feelings and manage these issues. Remember: it is the situation that is abnormal, NOT the person or their reaction.

Seeing a psychologist is just like seeing any other health professional. It is an opportunity to talk about your difficulties with someone trained in emotional well being and to
understand how you might deal with these. It does **NOT** mean that you are ‘weak’ or mentally ill. For instance, you and your psychologist can think together about different and perhaps more effective ways of coping with your issues and concerns, or how to deal with distress relating to dialysis or transplantation. Many people who have seen a psychologist say it is helpful to discuss their situation in confidence with someone outside of the family.

**How can I arrange an appointment?**

You can talk to a nurse or doctor in the team if you would like to be referred to the Renal Psychological Support Service. Sometimes a doctor or nurse will ask you if you want to be referred. You will only be referred if you want to. It is your choice.

If you would like us to arrange an interpreter, please ask for this when you are referred.

**What will happen at the appointment?**

Your first meeting will be for about 45–60 minutes with the psychologist. You can bring someone with you to your assessment appointment if you want to. You will be asked about how you are feeling and coping, your background and you may be asked to complete a questionnaire. After the first meeting, we will agree together whether to meet again, how often and for how many sessions. You will normally be offered between one and six appointments, then a review. You may be seen as an outpatient, while you are on the dialysis unit or on a hospital ward if you are an inpatient.

If you are coping well or do not feel it is the right time for you, then you may decide not to make any further appointments. You are welcome to request a further appointment at any time.
Confidentiality
Your meetings with your psychologist are confidential. The limits of confidentiality (e.g. responding to risks such as serious harm to you or other people) will be discussed with you at your first appointment. The psychologist works as part of the Renal Team. Some information may be shared with the team to help them understand you better and to take into account any psychological issues. If you want something to be kept confidential from the team please discuss this with your psychologist and this will be respected wherever possible.

Teaching and training of clinical staff
At various times the Psychological Support Service may be involved in teaching various students including trainee clinical psychologists. If you do not wish a trainee to be involved in your care, please let your psychologist or counsellor know. This will not affect your care in any way.

General psychological support
Family and friends may provide help and we would always encourage you to seek support from these people if you feel able to. You can also contact the Renal Team who are committed to helping you cope with all aspects of renal disease. We would encourage you to talk to a member of staff if you have any questions, concerns or worries.
Complaints, enquires and feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you would like to enquire about or provide feedback about any of the information provided in this leaflet, please contact Dr Lindsey Chapman, Clinical Psychologist on 0121 371 5851.

If you have a concern, want advice or would like to make a complaint, you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0121 371 3280.
Please use the space below to write down any questions you may have and bring this with you to your next appointment.
The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit www.uhb.nhs.uk/health-talks.htm or call 0121 371 4957.

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