Department of Nephrology

The Renal Counselling and Psychological Support service

The Renal Counselling and Psychological Support Service is part of the multi-professional team that offers help and support to those who are experiencing difficulties due to their medical condition of kidney failure. The service is provided by the renal counsellors.

What is counselling?

Counselling involves a meeting between a counsellor and a patient, in a private and confidential setting, to explore a difficulty a patient is experiencing. The counsellor usually helps patients who are experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties. These difficulties may be causing worry, distress, anxiety, depression, poor sleep, dissatisfaction with life, or a loss of a sense of direction or purpose.

What kind of help does a counsellor provide?

A counsellor will provide time and space to listen carefully to what is concerning you. By doing this they come to understand more fully the problems you are experiencing. They may be able to help you to see things more clearly, especially if you are feeling confused or overwhelmed.

A counsellor offers an opportunity to explore thoughts, feelings and concerns that are important to you. This may help you to gain insight, to make choices, or to adapt to, or accept things that can't be changed. It may help you to feel less anxious or stressed, to feel stronger, and to feel that you have some control. The counsellor's help may enable you to manage your health problem more effectively, and to enjoy life more. It may help you to learn additional skills and strategies for dealing with the stress of the changes and challenges that you may be facing.

What problems may be helped by counselling?

Kidney failure and treatments can sometimes be difficult to deal with. As a patient with kidney failure you may have become familiar with some of the physical changes that this often brings to people's lives. These can include fatigue, irritability and loss of sexual desire. If you are on dialysis the dependency on a machine or the routine of peritoneal dialysis may be difficult to manage. Restrictions on food and fluids may be unwelcome. Considering a kidney transplant may bring particular concerns.
People ask for counselling help for a range of problems.

These include:

- Coming to terms with kidney failure
- Distress about the diagnosis
- Thinking through the various treatment options so that you can make the best decision for your particular personal circumstances
- Help in keeping to your treatment regime
- Coming to a really informed decision about living kidney donation, and talking through the emotional or relationship implications of it
- Difficulties in your relationship including sexual difficulties
- Anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Low mood
- Depression
- Fear
- Managing pain
- Managing sleep problems
- Managing difficult or uncomfortable feelings
- Coping with changes in your life style.

**Where will I see the renal counsellor?**

If you are not staying in the hospital, a renal counsellor will see you in the counselling room in the Dialysis Centre. If you are staying in the hospital a counsellor will try to meet with you in a private space. In cases where this is difficult, or you are feeling unable to leave your bed, a counsellor will meet you at your bedside, and try to make the meeting as private as possible.

The length of the meeting will be guided by your needs and wishes, but would not usually be more than an hour.

**Will I have to wait for an appointment?**

You may have to wait a couple of weeks for an outpatient appointment, but if you are staying in hospital the counsellor will try to see you within a few days.

**How long will I need to go on being seen?**

Some people need just one or two meetings. Others may need a weekly appointment for 12 to 16 weeks and occasionally for longer.

**What will happen to the information I share with the counsellor?**

Anything you share with the counsellor will be treated as confidential information.
However, the counsellor works as part of a multi-professional team and at times it may be necessary to share some information with other colleagues. This will only happen:

- In order to improve the care you receive
- If there are special circumstances involving risk of harm.

If the counsellor feels it is necessary to share any information about you this would be discussed with you first.

**Contact details:**

Any patient with kidney failure may arrange to see a renal counsellor. The service is also available to family members.

You can contact one of the counsellors yourself, or you can ask any other medical professional involved in your care to refer you.

Renal Counsellors:
Cambridge Dialysis Centre
Unit E
Beadle Industrial Estate
Ditton Walk
Cambridge
CB5 8PD
Telephone: 01223 400186 or Addenbrooke’s Hospital telephone 01223 274544.

**Privacy & Dignity**

Same sex bays and bathrooms are offered in all wards except critical care and theatre recovery areas where the use of high-tech equipment and/or specialist one to one care is required.
We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site.
For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

**Other formats:**

If you would like this information in another language, **large print** or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team:

patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

**Document history**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Renal Counsellor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacist</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ <a href="http://www.cuh.org.uk">www.cuh.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact number</td>
<td>01223 400186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publish/Review date</td>
<td>April 2016/April 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>File name</td>
<td>Renal_counselling.doc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version number/Ref</td>
<td>2/PIN3351</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>