Disclosure Information

When Burdens Exceed Benefits: Appropriate withholding or withdrawal of dialysis
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Vanessa Grubbs, MD, MPH
I have the following financial relationship to disclose:
- Grant/Research support from: CA Healthcare Foundation
I will not discuss off label use/or investigational use in my presentation.

When Burdens Exceed Benefits: Appropriate withholding or withdrawal of dialysis

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Mrs. Lee
What makes it difficult

- Talking about prognosis and death
- Uncertainty about prognosis
- Uncertainty about what being on dialysis will mean
- Emotional
- Patient and family perspectives
- Time

Changing demographic of maintenance dialysis population

1967
- Only 7% over age 55
- Otherwise healthy
- Goal survival AND rehabilitation

2011
- Half over age 62
- Prevalence of age 75+ has doubled over last 20 years
- Majority have several comorbid conditions in addition to ESRD
- Goal survival

- Evan et al. JAMA, 1981
- USRDS Atlas 2014

Dialysis is not all good or all bad

Potential Benefits
- Life extension
- Symptom relief
- Improved quality of life
- Social aspects

Potential Burdens
- Procedures for access
- Time spent undergoing dialysis
- Increased hospitalizations and setbacks
- Symptoms related to dialysis or its complications

- Schell and Cohen. CJASN, 2014
The frail elderly patient has very limited life expectancy after starting dialysis

Most frail patients decline soon after starting dialysis

Dialysis corrects uremia but the ESRD trajectory continues
Comparative survival by comorbidity

Chandna et al. Nephrol Dial Transplant, 2011

Much of time gained is spent at dialysis or in hospital

Reproduced from Carson et al. CJASN, 2009

More intense care in the final month of life

When to consider withholding dialysis

Two or more Predictors of Poor Prognosis

- Age
- Functional ability
- Nutritional status
- Comorbid Illnesses—e.g. dementia, PVD

ACP. Shared Decision-Making clinical practice guideline 2nd ed. 2010

Decisions About Dialysis
For People Over The Age Of 75

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www.acpdecisions.org

Nephrologist as Expert

Patient as Expert
Framework for dialysis decision-making
SPIRES

- Setup
- Perceptions
- Invitation
- Recommendation
- Empathize
- Summarize and strategize

Schell and Cohen. CJASN, 2014
Making a recommendation: What to say

“Patients who have been in your situation sometimes experience more of the side effects of dialysis than benefits... When a patient has other medical conditions, dialysis may not significantly extend survival.”

or

“Based on your goals, I would recommend that we start dialysis with the hope that you are able to __. I also want to talk about the situation if dialysis does not achieve these goals or becomes too burdensome.”

Schell and Cohen. CJASN, 2014

Then what?
Supportive Care without dialysis

- Assure comfort/non-abandonment
- Address timing
- Explain what to expect
- Consult others
When to consider withdrawing dialysis

- Patient who develops severe illness that changes life expectancy
- Patient started on dialysis in setting of AKI with unclear life expectancy/goals of care
- Patient with progressive functional or cognitive decline

Withdrawing dialysis

- Raise issue/ Support patient decision
- Assure comfort/non-abandonment
- Address timing
- Explain what to expect
- Consult others
- Consider saying good-bye

Thank you

Questions?
A palliative approach to dialysis care

A new standard of care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Disease-Focused Approach</th>
<th>Patient-Centered Approach to Dialysis Care</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fistula First</td>
<td>Central venous catheter acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum kt/V</td>
<td>Lower clearance may be acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treating cardiovascular risk factors</td>
<td>Tolerate hypertension to avoid symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietary restrictions and binders</td>
<td>No dyslipidemia treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine monthly lab tests</td>
<td>Minimal lab tests necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-center hemodialysis if dependent</td>
<td>Staff-assisted home dialysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A palliative approach

- begins with discussion of hopes and goals
- may reduce conflict and anxiety
- may help transition to withdrawal