

Dialysis: A Way to Life

By Elizabeth Credle, PAC Chair Queens and Nassau Counties



Back in 1993, nineteen years ago, I stated “I would rather die than to live on dialysis”. That was my initial response upon learning that my kidneys were no longer functioning at capacity and I would need dialysis. A lot has changed since then. My lack of knowledge about dialysis caused me to believe it was a death sentence. I refused treatment for two years before I admitted it was something I really needed to stay alive.

I started with peritoneal dialysis (PD) which gave me the most education about dialysis. I eventually graduated to the PD cyclor overnight. I continued to work and travel. I have been on in-center

hemodialysis for many years now and over the years, I began to realize I'm not sick; I just have a different way of life. Viewing dialysis as a "Way to Life" gives me a healthy way of living and enjoying the prospects it provides.

There is a lot we can do as persons on dialysis. I'm grateful there is such a thing as dialysis for without it I would not have been able to enjoy these nineteen years of retirement from law enforcement. Nor would I be able to continue what I had learned throughout my career and through various volunteer services. What I have learned and am sharing with you today is simple: Let's be thankful and get on with our lives. We are not sick; we just have a new way to live!!!

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These PAC Chairpersons oversee the activities of the PAC Representatives in local facilities. PAC Chairs are happy to come out (schedule permitting) to Patient Meetings as guest speakers. If you would like a PAC Chairperson to be a guest speaker, please contact the Network's Community Outreach Coordinator at least one month before the meeting to allow for scheduling: Anna Bennett at (516) 209-5474 or info@nw2.esrd.net.

Elizabeth's Answer to Frequently Asked Questions

Why Am I On Dialysis?

We are on dialysis because our kidneys no longer function, we therefore need the artificial kidney the dialyzer provides to clean our blood and remove as much accumulated fluid as possible.

Not everyone on dialysis has the same diagnosis which resulted in ESRD, some have polycystic kidney disease, others from diabetes, some from high blood pressure or it could be "unknown" or from a multitude of other ailments. It is best to talk with your nephrologist to understand and know exactly what caused your kidney failure.

My message is just to let you know that you are on dialysis to preserve and save your life. Without the elimination of excess fluid and impurities from our bodies, we perish. I'm not sugar coating this because it is necessary for all to know the importance of dialysis. We must take it seriously and comply with all aspects of our treatment; treating our ESRD is more than just going to treatments, it includes the foods we eat to the binders we take, and our outlook will either help us or hurt us. I chose dialysis as a way to life, and now, after nineteen years, I am sharing my experience with you.

Why must I sit through all my treatments?

Some dialysis patients believe that dialysis is simply the act of removing fluid. It is much more than that. Dialysis also cleans the blood. Without the removal of impurities from the blood, many other complications set in. Dialysis does not completely remove all of the impurities; however, it does as much as it can as long as we go to every scheduled treatment and don't cut treatment times short.

The foods we consume on a daily basis contain various minerals (Phosphorus) and nutrients (Potassium) that accumulate and create problems for us because they are no longer broken down and released through urination; we need to use dialysis to clean these excess minerals and nutrients from our blood. Some of the side effects of toxic build up are: mental disturbances; heart problems and death. There are so many other complications that can arise – be sure to speak with your health care team about anything that seems to be abnormal. Remember, going to all of your treatments is necessary to our good health, and sound mind.

Elizabeth J. Credle, Queens/Nassau PAC Chairperson

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening. I am a fellow patient at The Pola Tenenbaum Renal Care Center. I have been on dialysis for the last seventeen years, and have now decided to place myself on the transplant list at the New York Presbyterian Hospital Center.

I am a veteran law enforcement officer, retired sixteen years, since retirement I have volunteered as a PAC Chair, as the Patient Representative to the Network Medical Review Board, Ombudsman advocating for the long term care of residents in nursing homes, and for many years, I have been working Election Day polls in New York. I have learned much about ESRD and dialysis in these sixteen years, and wish to impart that knowledge with you. It is my desire to educate and encourage you to view dialysis as a "Way To Life", as I have done, and to empower you to live the best life you possibly can through knowledge, patience and by understanding your need for dialysis, as well as what it does for you!!