

Kidney Peer Support Work

In July 2018 a team of Kidney Peer supporters met at the Royal Free Hospital for a photo shoot as part of a project to develop posters to advertise their fantastic service.

Over the last year a team of kidney nurses and doctors have worked together with the support of the hospital volunteer team and the kidney patient's association to re-launch the kidney peer support service. Peer support involves putting a kidney patient in touch with another person with first hand experience of kidney disease for an informal one to one chat. Being a kidney patient can be challenging, having to make difficult decisions about treatments such as kidney transplant or dialysis, together with having to restrict what you eat and drink whilst remembering to take multiple medications.

Whilst kidney patients are offered education and support by nurses, doctors and other health professionals, many people find it helpful to talk to someone who is in a similar position or who has been through the same treatment. Indeed, what has struck me during our peer support training sessions is that all of our volunteers wished that they had had the opportunity to talk to another patient at some stage during their journey through the kidney service.

Since the re-launch of the peer supporter service in September 2017, 21 volunteers have attended one of our kidney peer support training sessions. The training session lasts 2-3 hours and is run by the peer support team; a group of nurses and one of our psychologists who are passionate about providing a peer support service for our patients. During the sessions I have been struck by the motivation and commitment of our volunteers who speak so passionately about their desire to help other patients through difficult times.

We have slowly been receiving referrals for peer support, mostly these come from the nursing and medical team but we are hoping that patients will also contact us directly for support. This is what led us to create posters featuring some of our active supporters and their journeys. We are hoping the posters will be ready in the next month and will be displayed in all of our kidney care centres.

Meet two of our Peer supporters:

Gillian:



'I have been a kidney patient at the Royal Free Hospital for over ten years. My son, who is now 25, was also born there, so it feels like home and the staff feel like family. The medical care for Kidney patients is excellent, but kidney disease can be a huge challenge and just like any other challenge, the journey is made easier if the people who help through it, understand what you are going through, because they've been that way before. That's why I became a peer supporter, to help kidney patients have an easier time through Kidney disease, by sharing my experience and helping patients understand that there is life after Chronic Kidney disease. 'The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.' I hope the first step on your kidney journey is a call to a peer supporter.'

Helene



It all came as a rather nasty shock. I'm sure I did not take in much of what the doctors said at the time. If only I could have spoken to someone who had been through a similar set of medical events I could have asked more pertinent questions and would have had a greater understanding of what lay ahead instead of muddling through. So phone me, I will be happy to share information and answer your questions.

To find out more or arrange to speak to a trained peer supporter please ask a member of your kidney team or email rf-tr.renalpeersupport@nhs.net.