

Center offers patients care with procedure

By SHERRI CONER
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As Eric Roach walked into the Indianapolis dialysis center, several nurses offered smiles and hugs. He knows most of them by name. He asks about their families. They ask about his. Patients chat, read or doze in more than 30 green vinyl recliners lining the large room.



ROACH

Some patients have brought blankets to use in the slightly chilly room. Others have brought snacks. A few suck on ice chips. All are receiving dialysis treatments, a three- to four-hour process that mimics the functions of the human kidney.

Although kidneys are small, fist-sized organs, they receive a huge amount — 20 percent — of the blood pumped from the heart.

This blood supply helps keep the volume of water in the body constant, removes toxic substances from the body and helps regulate blood pressure while also stimulating the making of red blood cells and maintaining calcium levels.

About 300,000 Americans are undergoing dialysis, according to the U.S. Renal Data System. Worldwide, there are more than 1.5 million dialysis patients.

Because his kidneys failed and were eventually removed, Roach visited the dialysis center regularly for two years. For the past three years, he has been utilizing home dialysis.

He still visits the dialysis institute once monthly for blood work. When Roach arrives at the center, he must first weigh in.

"The whole thing about dialysis is whether or not it is pulling off the fluids," Roach said as he stepped on the scales.

"The nurses find out how much water has been pulled off when they weigh you."

Kidney disease chooses people of all ages, Roach said as he scanned the room of filled recliners. He notes a young man who doesn't look past 30 sitting with patients ranging in their 50s and older.

"At least kidney failure isn't exactly terminal," Roach said. "At least you have two options. Trans-

plant or dialysis. But transplant isn't the panacea, either, you know. There are a lot of side effects."

At 46, this father of three has seen all sides of kidney disease.

Born with a congenital defect in his kidneys, Roach struggled for most of his childhood with bladder surgeries and catheterizations.

For more than 15 years of young adulthood, Roach led a fairly healthy, active life.

Since his kidneys failed more than 10 years ago, he has undergone a kidney transplant, which temporarily gave him seven years of a fairly healthy life.

And now, for five years, Roach has been a dialysis patient.

After Roach weighs in, nurse Terri Campbell jokes with him as she draws some blood for routine lab work.

Roach speaks briefly to the center's dietitian, Danielle Paylor, about his diet.

Common problems for dialysis patients include whether their diets include enough protein, phosphorus, potassium and calcium, Paylor said.

Roach also speaks with the center's social worker, Vernon Marsh. "A lot of times, people end up with situational depression as they adjust to the routine of coming in for dialysis," Marsh said. "I also help them understand what their bodies are going through."

"For folks who have physically demanding jobs, it's really, really hard to keep going when you have to go to dialysis."

Though it is physically taxing to juggle employment with dialysis, Marsh advocates for dialysis patients to continue to work as long as they can.

Emotionally, they seem to be more accepting of dialysis if they have somewhere else to put their energies, Marsh said.

"We really try to keep folks working for as long as they can," Marsh said. "They just do so much better."

Marsh said patients of all ages undergo dialysis.

"We have some patients who start dialysis in their teen years," Marsh said. "And yesterday, I had a guy start, and he was 83."

Some patients have congenital kidney function problems like Roach. Others have complications from diabetes or hypertension.

"We also have folks in their 30s and 40s who come in with substance abuse problems. Basically, they've burned out their kidneys with cocaine," Marsh said.



STAFF PHOTOS BY SCOTT ROBERSON@roberson@thejournalnet.com

Roland Hill receives a four-hour kidney dialysis treatment three times a week. The 79-year-old is not a candidate for a transplant because of his age.

Dealing with dialysis

Treatment, not transplant, will have to do for New Whiteland man

By SHERRI CONER
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For the rest of his life, Roland Hill knows what he'll be doing every Monday, Wednesday and Friday: undergoing kidney dialysis.

"They tell me that, at my age, I'm not a candidate for transplant," said Hill, who is 79.

On treatment days, anticipating the four-hour procedure, Hill rises early and applies a numbing salve to his left forearm.

Shortly after 6 a.m., he drives from his New Whiteland home to Fresenius Medical Care in Greenwood.

Hill retired several years ago from General Electric after 34 years of service. He and his wife, Betty, taught dance lessons — ballroom dance, country line dancing, even some square dancing — for more than 30 years. They still occasionally teach some simple steps at the Franklin Senior Center.

They do nearly everything together. They always have, Betty Hill said with a smile. But on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, Roland Hill leaves home alone to rest in a recliner at the dialysis center.

He takes along a headset and one of his favorite big band cassettes.

"We knew he would have to go on dial-



Roland Hill points to a graft, a synthetic tube doctors placed under the surface of his skin, that accepts needles used for receiving dialysis treatments.

ysis one day," Betty Hill said. "We knew the day would come."

Before his 30th birthday, Roland Hill was prescribed medication for hypertension. Through the years, he was

warned that medication for hypertension affected kidney function.

"But I have to take the blood pressure medicine to stay alive," he said.

Three sons, two granddaughters and a great-grandson later, Hill's kidneys failed. Since April, Hill's schedule has revolved around dialysis treatments.

Sometimes, Hill's blood pressure is dangerously low when dialysis is completed. He feels light-headed. His knees hurt.

He goes home and catnaps in his recliner for much of the afternoon.

"It's really cut into our activities," Betty Hill said of the dialysis treatments. "But that's OK."

Betty is a petite woman who has worried so much about her husband's dialysis that she has lost several pounds she couldn't afford to lose, Roland Hill said.

Because too much liquid intake during the day results in fluid gathering around Roland Hill's heart, Betty Hill has to monitor his diet. She also has to measure his liquid intake. It's a stress Betty Hill is still trying to conquer.

The positive is that dialysis is not painful, Roland Hill said.

Aside from feeling weak and dizzy sometimes after the treatments, he mainly struggles with sitting still for four hours.

"I get bored," Hill said. "I have always been active, up doing things."

• Machines

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

spent two years going to an Indianapolis clinic for dialysis treatments and is now one of only 10 Hoosiers undergoing dialysis at home while he sleeps.

Until a second kidney transplant can be performed, dialysis is Roach's life line, just as it is for more than 6,000 Hoosiers.

Often after he completes dialysis treatments and tries to start his day, Roach experiences severe muscle cramps, so painful that it hurts to climb the stairs of his home.

He feels light-headed and dizzy, and his blood pressure plummets.

Roach was born with a defective valve between the kidneys and bladder. Because the valve did not drain normally, urine constantly backed up in his kidneys.

"All through grade school, I had massive infections," he said.

The kidneys receive about a quart of blood every minute, which is filtered through microscopic filtering units called nephrons. Filtration of the blood through the nephrons is responsible for maintaining the delicate fluid and electrolyte balance the body needs, and the removal of excess fluid and chemical waste through the production of urine.

To maintain kidney health:

- Get regular evaluations for diabetes

OUNCE OF PREVENTION

and high blood pressure and tests for the presence of high amounts of protein in the urine, a sign of kidney damage.

- Control blood pressure.
- Maintain appropriate weight level.
- Exercise regularly.
- Don't smoke.
- Drink appropriate amounts water, which helps flush substances that form stones from the kidneys. It is not necessary to eliminate coffee, tea, and colas from your diet, but limit caffeine

"I had to repeat third grade. I missed so much school."

By fifth grade, Roach had undergone three reconstructive bladder surgeries and spent more than two years of his childhood using a catheter, or drain tube, and a waste collection bag.

"That gave my bladder enough of a rest," he said. "I didn't have any more problems for 17 years."

He studied vocal music at Butler University and pursued a career in New York, even performing on Broadway. He was injured in an accident in a the-

ater when he was 24.

A medical examination showed his kidneys were deteriorating.

The Roaches and their son, Tyler, moved back to Indiana. Knowing that his kidneys were failing, Roach became a computer consultant, a career that was less physically taxing.

Ten years later, Roach's kidneys completely failed. Surgery was performed to remove both kidneys.

Dialysis was now essential. "As soon as they remove your kidneys — boom — you're

instantly on dialysis," he said.

Three months later he received a transplanted kidney.

For nearly eight years, Roach's life seemed back on track. Then his transplanted kidney also began to fail.

"Transplanted kidneys always fail," Roach said with a shrug. "I got really, really sick."

At the time, Roach was in Texas on business.

His body was swollen. His skin itched. He had a metallic taste in his mouth. His thoughts were unclear. He felt disoriented.

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