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PREVENTIVE HEALTH IN A CHANGING WORLD

PERSPECTIVES ON DECISION MAKING AMONGST OLDER END-STAGE RENAL DISEASE PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS IN SINGAPORE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Background

End-stage renal disease (ESRD) is increasing both globally and in Asia. Singapore has the fifth highest incidence of ESRD worldwide, a trend that is predicted to rise. Older patients with ESRD are faced with a choice of hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis or conservative management; all of which have their risks and benefits. This study seeks to explore perspectives on decision making amongst older (≥ 70) Singaporean ESRD patients and their caregivers to undergo (or not to undergo) dialysis.

Methods

This qualitative study involved semi-structured interviews with 7 peritoneal dialysis patients, 5 haemodialysis patients, 4 patients on non-dialysis supportive care, and 7 caregivers.

Results

While some patients believed that they had made an independent treatment decision, others reported feeling like they had no choice in the matter or that they were strongly persuaded by their doctors and/or family members to undergo dialysis. Patients reported decision-making factors including loss of autonomy in daily life, financial burden (on themselves or on their families), caregiving burden, alternative medicine, symptoms and disease progression. Caregivers also reported concerns about financial and caregiving burden.

Conclusion

This study has identified several factors that should be considered in the design and implementation of decision aids to help older ESRD patients in Singapore make informed treatment decisions, including patients' and caregivers' decision-making factors as well as the relational dynamics between patients, caregivers and doctors.