

“It is life threatening but I don’t mind”. A qualitative study exploring young people’s experiences of renal replacement therapies,

Francesca Wells

Nottingham university Hospitals

Ward E17, QMC, Derby Road, Nottingham, NG7 2UH

E-mail Francesca.wells@nuh.nhs.uk

Background: Renal replacement therapy (RRT) transforms life prospects of young people with established renal failure. However, these treatments have significant physiological and psychological implications for adolescents who are traditionally developing their autonomy and identity as they prepare to transition into adulthood. Policy emphasises YP’s active participation and consultation as users of health services, yet studies infrequently seek their experiences directly.

Aim: To explore adolescents’ experiences of RRT.

Methods: Adolescents undergoing RRT in a large UK teaching hospital took photographs illustrating the personal impact of their condition and treatment. Qualitative photo elicitation interviews were conducted to explore the significance of the images. Interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Findings: Ten young people aged 13-17 participated. Health was prioritised over body image, contrary to traditional concerns of young people. Participants demonstrated great emotional resilience, despite finding treatments challenging and experiencing significant impact on relationships and daily routines.

Conclusions: Young people engaged readily with the research, and frankly described the impact of RRT on their everyday lives. Service providers must ensure that adolescents’ developmental needs are met as traditional tasks of adolescence may lose priority. However, it is also clear that YP’s ability to cope with treatments should not be underestimated.