Does an Online Decision Aid Help People with Advanced Chronic Kidney Disease Choose between Two Treatment Options?

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### What was the research about?
Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a health problem in which the kidneys do not work well to remove waste from the blood. Some people with CKD have kidney failure, which means that they lose most of their kidney function. As kidneys fail, most people will need to choose between two common treatments:

- Hemodialysis, which is treatment with a machine that cleans the blood. Patients receive this procedure at a treatment center.
- Peritoneal dialysis, which is pumping a cleansing fluid into the belly through a tube and then letting it drain out again, taking wastes away with the fluid. Patients can do this treatment at home or work.

For this study, the research team created and tested an online decision aid. Decision aids help people choose between two or more treatments based on what is most important to them. The decision aid in this study gave patients information on CKD and compared the two treatment options. The research team wanted to learn if the decision aid increased patients’ knowledge about CKD and helped them with their decision.

### What were the results?
The decision aid increased:

- How sure patients were about what was most important to them in choosing between treatments
- How sure patients felt about which treatment they would choose

The decision aid didn’t change patients’ self-confidence in their ability to decide which treatment would be best for them.

### Who was in the study?
The study included 140 patients with advanced CKD who had not started dialysis. The average patient age was 59. About 77 percent of patients in the study were white, and 16 percent were African American. Almost all patients had at least a high school degree, and 94 percent spoke English as their native language.

### What did the research team do?
The research team assigned patients to one of two groups by chance. One group used the decision aid, and the other group didn’t. Patients in the first group took a survey before and after using the decision aid. The survey asked patients what they knew about CKD and asked them about how they make decisions about treatment. Patients in the second group took the survey only once. A panel of patients, caregivers, social workers, and doctors provided input on the study.

### What were the limits of the study?
Patients who took part in the study were younger and healthier, and they had more education, than the
average person with advanced CKD in the United States. The effect of the decision aid may not be the same for other groups of people.

Future research could test the decision aid in more CKD treatment centers with more patients. Future studies could also compare this new decision aid to existing ways of helping patients decide between dialysis treatment options.

How can people use the results?
Patients with advanced CKD may consider using decision aids such as the one in this study to learn more about dialysis options and help decide which treatment best matches their needs and preferences.

To learn more about this project, visit pcori.org/Subramanian050.