



## **COVID-19 Blog: Home dialysis - the time is now**

The COVID-19 global pandemic has forced all of us to do things differently. Those of us at the front lines of health care must continue to show up each and every day to take care of patients. It is obvious that this virus will push our health systems to the brink of collapse, and many difficult decisions are being made each and every day in our planning and at the front lines of care.

Kidney failure patients are some of the most vulnerable and frail patients in our healthcare system. They tend to be older and commonly suffer from many comorbid conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, mobility issues and cognitive impairment. Most of these patients get their life sustaining dialysis three times a week in dedicated facilities. Most report poor health related quality of life at the best of times.

For this highly vulnerable kidney failure population, the emergence of COVID-19 is especially devastating. If they contract the virus, it is reported their mortality could be in excess of 20 percent. They must continue to show up for their life sustaining dialysis treatments with other vulnerable, elderly patients and sit in close contact with them for four hours at a time, three days a week. The hardworking healthcare workers, support staff and non-emergency transport personnel that help them are all continuously at risk. It is a new normal that may still go on for months with no clear end in sight to when we will return to business as usual.

For many more patients, this doesn't have to be the way. As a kidney community we must strive more than ever before to get our most vulnerable patients out of facilities and into their homes to receive their dialysis treatments. This frees up facilities, skilled staff and transport providers to be deployed elsewhere in the system. More importantly, this keeps our most vulnerable patients within the relative safety of their homes. With a combination of digital health monitoring solutions, home care assistants and easier to use home dialysis equipment we can make this happen. These recommendations including encouraging home therapies whenever possible and using telemedicine have been endorsed by rapid review guidelines for this pandemic such as those put out by [National Institute for Health Care Excellence](#) in the UK. The time is now more than ever before.