

Question on Notice
No. 189
Asked on 19 March 2014

MRS MILLER asked the Minister for Health (MR SPRINGBORG)-

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide details of recent changes to dialysis services in Metro North Hospital and Health Service, in particular, (a) explain if there is sufficient capacity to manage increasing demand, (b) whether patients are currently being transported between the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital and other local hospitals and dialysis centres, (c) whether transport services are ceasing prior to patients completing their dialysis treatment, and if so, what alternative transport is being provided for patients and (d) what the waiting times are for this alternative transport?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Bundamba for her question.

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) is a serious condition. CKD is responsible for substantial burden of illness and premature mortality. One in three of the population is at increased risk of kidney disease. There are no warning signs for CKD and an individual can lose up to 90% of their kidney function before they feel any symptoms. Once the disease has progressed to End-Stage Kidney Disease (ESKD), renal replacement therapy of dialysis or transplant are the only treatment options.

The Metro North Hospital and Health Service (MNHHS) is a leader in terms of the provision of renal support services both in Queensland and Australia.

In relation to the specific questions, I am advised as follows:

- (a) Within the MNHHS, the growth rate in the need for chronic haemodialysis varies over time and is presently running at 5.77% annualised.

The Metro North Kidney Health Service runs a number of programs to help slow the progression of kidney disease within the community. The service is currently piloting a program, Keeping Kidneys, across Hospital Health Services in collaboration with primary health care providers to improve patient access to specialised management at an earlier stage of chronic kidney disease and slow progression to ESKD and dialysis.

Currently, 275 people are receiving dialysis in the MNHHS which is around 10% of the population currently under the care of the Metro North Kidney Health Service.

The MNHHS maintains over 50% of the dialysis dependent population within their own home environment. This provides improved clinical outcomes and benefits for the patients.

Chronic centre based Haemodialysis services are delivered across three main campuses within the MNHHS - North Lakes Dialysis Unit, Redcliffe Dialysis Unit and Herston Dialysis Unit (Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH)).

There are a number of actions available to ensure existing capacity is utilised including providing additional opportunities for patients to dialyse at the North Lakes Dialysis Unit. The Department of Health and the RBWH are working together to develop further capacity to meet the growing demand.

- (b) As noted above, Chronic centre based Haemodialysis services are delivered across three main campuses within the MNHHS - North Lakes Dialysis Unit, Redcliffe Dialysis Unit and Herston Dialysis Unit (RBWH). Dialysis patients move between these units on the principle of dialysing at a location nearest where they live, providing the services meet their clinical need.

The Acute Dialysis Unit also provides outreach services to The Prince Charles Hospital. In the past, patients have transferred between The Prince Charles Hospital and RBWH for the purposes of acute dialysis. This has not occurred in the last 12 months.

All patients new to the Chronic centre based Haemodialysis program in the MNHHS start in the Transition Unit. This is located at the RBWH. Patient care needs are documented and tailored prior to transfer to the location closest to the patient's home that delivers the specific care needed.

The MNHHS, through the Transport Co-ordinator at each hospital will arrange/manage transport. The patient's General Practitioner (GP) may also be asked to assist.

It should be noted that parking is provided at all sites for patients. Parking at Redcliffe and North Lakes is free of charge. Parking at the RBWH is also free, however the patient must obtain a permit to do so.

- (c) Patients within the Metro North Kidney Health Service utilise a variety of transport options. These are tailored to the individual needs of the patients. Some of the transport options within the MNHHS standing offer arrangements are not available after 4.30pm. Scheduling of patients takes into consideration transport arrangements and as such treatment is worked around transport availability.
- (d) As indicated above, patient transport needs are individually tailored and therefore, there is no added waiting times through providing alternative transport.