

A haemodialysis training centre opened in April at United Christian Hospital in Kwun Tong will enable six more chronic kidney disease patients in Kowloon East to receive the treatment in their homes this year, the Hospital Authority announced as part of its annual plan for the group of hospitals in the area.

The service was first introduced to public hospitals in 2006, and the training centre is the fifth one to open under the authority.

Home haemodialysis allows the treatment - which removes waste from blood for patients whose kidneys are unable to do so - to be carried out in homes for around six to eight hours every other night as required while a patient is asleep.

If the procedure is done in hospital it requires a patient to be there three times a week for around five hours each time. Home treatment therefore minimises discomfort and the impact on patients' lives.

"It's much milder, as we can use the entire night to release water and toxins," said Dr Sunny Wong Sze-ho, a consultant at the hospital's department of medicine and geriatrics.

Patients pay around HK\$1,100 to HK\$1,300 a month for home treatment, with the remaining costs borne by the authority. Dialysis machines have been donated by the Kidney Foundation and the Jockey Club.

Wong said eligible patients are required to undergo training for around three months to learn how to place needles in their arm and operate the machine alone.

"They have to be young and physically stable ... The home environment must be hygienic, too," Wong said.

Yeung Wai-lin, 50, has been suffering from polycystic kidney disease for four years and has been receiving haemodialysis in hospitals. She was one of the first patients trained for the home procedure and is expected to begin treatment in September.

"I can conduct the procedures for several nights at home and then go travelling for a couple of days. I would like to visit Japan," said Yeung, who currently has to visit hospitals twice a week. She has spent around HK\$30,000 renovating her flat to prepare it for home treatment.

Demand for treatment for renal failure has been growing in the Kowloon East group of hospitals. There are now 190 haemodialysis patients and 530 receiving peritoneal dialysis - another treatment for kidney failure - including 20 severe cases that might need haemodialysis later.

Hospitals in the cluster will train another 10 patients next year in the home procedure. The quota for haemodialysis in hospitals is 99 after being increased by two this year.

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