

MEDIA RELEASE
13 July 2018
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kidney Health Australia to Develop Pioneering Youth Program

Kidney Health Australia has received funding of \$800,000 from the Australian Government to develop a ground-breaking program to support young adults living with advanced kidney disease.

The much needed program will focus on providing peer support and education activities for the estimated 700 young people aged 18 to 24 living in Australia, who are going through the difficult transition from paediatric care to adult clinical health settings.

The shift from paediatric to adult health care is challenging for young people, their families and health care workers. Teenagers and young adults have the worst outcomes after a kidney transplant of any age group under 70, with approximately a third of their kidney transplants failing within five years.

As well as coping with the normal challenges of adolescence, young people with kidney disease must also manage the difficulties of living with a severe chronic disease.

Young patients with kidney disease often receive one-on-one attention in clinical paediatric settings. Upon progressing to young adulthood, however, patients under 25 years of age often struggle to cope with the shift to an adult healthcare setting, where staff are often under-resourced to provide tailored support specific to young adults.

Interim Chief Executive Officer of Kidney Health Australia, Dr Lisa Murphy, said many young patients with kidney transplants or those on dialysis desperately needed more support.

“If the model is successful, it could be expanded to as many young adults as possible, which could also include other diseases, such as Type 1 diabetes,” Dr Murphy said.

In addressing the issue, transition clinics in the UK offering a similar service for young adults led to a 67% reduction in transplant failure associated with this transition.

Kidney Health Australia’s Young Adult Program will support improved health outcomes for younger patients through the development of peer support networks around the country, outside of the typical clinical settings. The program will facilitate face to face activities as well as online support groups, with telephone support through Kidney Health Australia’s national Kidney Helpline service.

Kidney Health Australia is optimistic the Young Adult Program will empower and equip young Australians living with kidney disease with the necessary support to maintain independence, pursue study and employment, and most importantly, increase success rates in kidney transplantation for young adults.

Every day, 53 people in Australia die with chronic kidney disease. It is a highly undiagnosed condition; most are tragically unaware they are affected until it’s too late. In fact, 90% of kidney function can be lost without experiencing any symptoms. Kidney Health Australia urge everyone to take the online kidney risk test at kidney.org.au.

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Kidney Health Australia is a not-for-profit and the peak body for kidney health in Australia with a vision 'to save and improve the lives of people living in Australia affected by kidney disease'. In 2018 Kidney Health Australia celebrates its 50th anniversary.

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