

Empowering patients to bring in their own blankets

Grimsby partnered with Kidney Quality Improvement Partnership (KQIP) and the regional sustainable QI initiative, Trying to Reduce UnNecessary Carbon from Haemodialysis (TRUNC-HD) to reduce the carbon emissions of our in-centre haemodialysis unit.

Project leads were identified and attended four KQIP local QI face-to-face workshops following the KQIP QI methodology and two Y&H TRUNC_HD regional sharing and learning meetings over the year. QI tools utilised included stakeholder analysis, process mapping to highlight the potential challenges and change ideas, development of a driver diagram showcasing the project on a page. A patient survey was developed to gain understanding of patients' thoughts on the potential change providing baseline data. This was distributed to all patients on the units, providing some information on the project and had three questions (Image 1). After the survey, patients were encouraged to bring their own blankets and cups.

Out of the 80 patients surveyed, all responses were positive. 100% of patients stated that they felt they could bring their own blanket and that they understood the reasons. No written comments were submitted. However, verbally 3 patients stated they did not have a blanket to bring to the unit and a further 2 patients stated they would not be providing their own blanket due to feeling the change was financially motivated and inconvenient for them.

This initiative reduced the number of blankets and cups ordered per week in a satellite dialysis unit from 180 to 50 and from 200 to 60 respectively saving an estimated of 1.4 to 1.7 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions (CO₂e).

Table 1: Estimate financial and environmental savings per year

Intervention	Numbers ordered pre-intervention (per week)	Number ordered post-intervention (per week)	Environmental saving (per year)	Estimated financial saving (per year)
Blankets	180	50	1342-1660kg CO ₂ e	£2974
Cups	200	60	72.8kg of less paper waste. 60kgCO ₂ e	£162.34

This case study highlights how patient involvement can drive small but impactful changes. While environmental savings were challenging to quantify due to variations in life cycle analyses of blankets and cups, the estimated reductions demonstrate potential benefits. Initial barriers included perceptions of staff and patients that environmental savings were not their responsibility, concerns about limited impact, and fears that this was a cost-cutting exercise. However, positive patient responses and staff encouragement and determination gradually improved engagement. The project raised awareness of carbon reduction strategies, provided insights into KQIP methodology, and gained recognition, with an opportunity to present at the November 2024 YHKN event. Plans are underway to expand the initiative across other units within the organisation and the region. Moving forward, to encourage the improvement work to be sustained and move it into a permanent change there are plans to source a welcome pack for patients which will include their own blanket and mug in re-usable bag with a small poster highlighting the project conducted.

Image 1: Patient survey

Bring your own blanket/cup survey

Here at Fresenius we are always looking for ways to improve on our environmental and sustainability outcomes as we are passionate about our planet. We are working in partnership with UK Kidney association, TRUNC. HD and KQUIP to analyse ways in which we can do this. One thing that has been highlighted as a way of improving this is to encourage patients to bring their own blankets and mugs each session. This would aim to reduce water and electricity usage by not washing multiple blankets after each session and reduce our waste by not using disposable cups.

We are currently using 180 blankets a week and around 200 cups per week too!

Our aim is to use 0 blankets and cups per week as many other satellite units already do.

We are working on a way to possibly be able to provide patients with a blanket and mug for them to bring with them each session but this may take some time, but we also feel that patients will feel more comfortable and homely if they are providing their own blanket and mug and these can also be good conversation starters for those that may feel lonely or uncomfortable during dialysis.

We would love to hear patients' thoughts on this because it can only work with your full support.

Do you feel it is possible for you to bring your own blanket and cup to dialysis?

YES NO

If no – why?

Do you understand the reasons we are asking you to provide your own cup and blanket?

YES NO

Any other comments regarding this:-

Biography

Amy Fenty is a haemodialysis nurse and environmental and sustainability link nurse at the Fresenius Grimsby dialysis unit. She is a passionate nurse, keen to support the reduction of carbon emissions and unnecessary waste within healthcare to support the future of the NHS by reducing costs which can be used to support others in need and helping others to become more environmentally sustainable.

For more information

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