Social media forums are effective as a resource for Peritoneal Dialysis (PD) nurses to discuss challenging patient situations and to access expert advice and support

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Introduction

In 2021 3,900 adults in the UK were on peritoneal dialysis, whilst 25,000 were in in-center haemodialysis UK renal registry report 2021).

The First National Peritoneal Dialysis Nurse Forum took place on Thursday 23 November 2017. At this first meeting it was suggested that a Facebook group should be set up so that members could stay connected and share experiences and ideas.

The nurses who attended the face-to-face meeting wanted an opportunity for open and honest debate around the different peritoneal dialysis products available on the market and to discuss the services from different peritoneal dialysis providers. This can only be achieved from an independent forum.

Aim

There were 2 aims of the forum:

1. To ensure that people on peritoneal dialysis receive the most up-to-date and evidence-based practice throughout the UK, while allowing attendees to network and be a resource for each other.
2. Provide two meetings per year in different locations across the UK

Methods

The Facebook group was set up on 24th October 2018 and called the National Peritoneal Dialysis Nurse Forum, it is a private group with 112 members and is only open to nurses who work in the NHS. The aim of the forum is for peritoneal dialysis nurses to discuss current practices, share experiences and knowledge, provide and receive peer support and review policies and protocols.

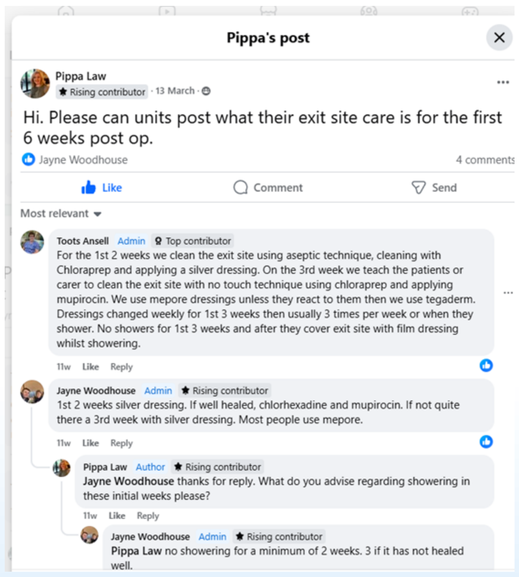
The group administrators are NHS nurses who manage PD services. It is a not-for-profit group which does not receive any sponsorship from our Industry Partners.

The group is very active with over 40 individual posts per year either sharing information or asking for advice. Discussions within the group have helped to influence new innovations in patients care, leading to new treatments. It provides advance warning of peritoneal dialysis product shortages and withdrawals which could have potentially catastrophic consequences if they had not been addressed early.

Unusual peritoneal dialysis complications have been discussed and protocols written. Evidence from the global group - International Society of peritoneal Dialysis may not have described these situations.

Evaluation

The feedback from its members highlights what an invaluable resource it is for peritoneal dialysis nurses in smaller units, giving them access to experienced peritoneal dialysis nurses from across the country for advice and support. It provides a perfect platform for networking. Group members have shared their policies and procedures as well as their experiences and challenges which enables people on peritoneal dialysis across the UK have equity of access to good quality, research based, peer reviewed peritoneal dialysis as a therapy.



National PD forum example of a sharing information through the Facebook group

Results

- Opening up the forum meeting to include online registration increased attendance by greater than 100%
- Nurses who could not attend due to staff shortages or withdrawal of training budget could still access the meeting
- There was no effect on the perceived quality of the meeting
- International Speakers were able to present without the need to travel

Utilising Social Media platforms to increase engagement

Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown resulted in all public meetings being suspended. As we gradually worked towards a new normal it became important to reimagine the way that we delivered the nurse forum meetings. We reduced the meeting to one a year and decided to look at introducing an online option via Teams. We added a teams log in to our PD nurse forum meeting on 15/02/2024. It was not a great success as those member who joined via Teams complained that they could not hear any questions that were asked by the “in house” audience not the subsequent answers. As a result, we asked for help in organising the teams meeting for our next meeting that was held on 3rd April 2025. This included a Microsoft virtual events powered by teams webpage for registration including an option to attend in person or online.

There were 196 views, 98 registrations and on the day 51 attended via teams and 40 attended in person. We were fortunate to be able to use the new lecture theatre at the Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth which included state of the art IT technology which enabled the online participants to hear any questions from the floor and the answers from the presenter. It was very highly evaluated by all participants with an average score of 4.5 out of 5.



National PD forum meeting, Portsmouth 3rd April 2025

Discussion and implications for practice

PD is a very specialised home therapy which is under utilised in the UK. The access to safe and specialist Facebook forum groups can assist units who are trying to build their peritoneal dialysis services by providing advice and opinions from experienced peritoneal dialysis nurses from across the UK. It is hoped that this will give smaller units confidence to grow their PD service and ultimately contribute to the UK GIRFT challenge of achieving a minimum of 20% of dialysis patients on a home therapy in every centre. Embracing social media platforms gives access to international speakers and allows you to reach a wider audience without effecting the quality of the meeting.

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