

Recommendation on actions to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission in adult UK haemodialysis units

COVID-19 infection rates are high across the UK, presenting an ongoing risk of COVID-19 transmission in our haemodialysis units which may now be exacerbated by the Omicron variant. Some patients are still at high risk of severe illness despite vaccination. The mortality rate of in-centre haemodialysis patients who sustain COVID-19 infection remains very high.

The KQuIP COVID-19 haemodialysis patient safety working group has made recommendations on best practice to minimise the risk of transmission¹ which have successfully prevented outbreaks when fully implemented, including weekly PCR testing for asymptomatic patients³. However, there is variation in their implementation across the UK².

Therefore, in addition to highlighting these current recommendations on best practice we strongly urge that the following actions are taken in all adult haemodialysis units without delay:

1. We endorse the [UKKA recommendation on COVID-19 vaccination](#), consistent with the updated advice of JCVI that dialysis patients should have a booster dose.
2. We encourage units to support the rapid implementation of booster/3rd dose vaccination.
3. Patients should continue to wear a fluid resistant surgical facemask type 11R
4. Maintain social distancing of >2 metres
5. Provision of COVID-safe transport
6. Weekly SARS-CoV-2 PCR test for all patients to facilitate early detection and isolation of asymptomatic cases.

NHS renal units should work collaboratively with their private dialysis providers to facilitate the above actions.

References

1. [KQuIP COVID-19 Haemodialysis Guidance December 2020](#) (currently under revision)
2. KQuIP survey of UK renal units August 2021
3. Poulidakos D, et al. A Quality Improvement project to minimise COVID-19 infections in patients receiving haemodialysis and the role of routine surveillance using nose and throat swabs for SARS-CoV-2 rRT-PCR and serum antibody testing. *Nephron*, in press