



47TH ANNA NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
MAY 1-4, 2016 ~ MARRIOTT LOUISVILLE &
KENTUCKY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER, LOUISVILLE, KY

The Lived Experience of Being a Caregiver for a Family Member Dependent Upon Hemodialysis

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The purpose of the study was to fill an identified gap in the literature regarding studies using an inductive approach that allow caregivers to describe the lived experience of caring for family members dependent upon hemodialysis for managing end stage kidney disease. The purposive sample of five female and one male caregivers were recruited from a mid-sized hospital in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The investigator conducted audio-recorded, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with participants. Using the Giorgi method of data analysis, six major themes and 12 sub-themes were identified. Perceptions of the caregiver participants were that caregiving is hard work and stressful; however, caregivers found the experience meaningful. Caregivers identified they need a support system and the stress of caregiving interferes with their own health. Uncertainty regarding the indeterminate time a family member will use hemodialysis added stress to caregivers. Study results should interest caregivers and healthcare professionals working with caregivers of family members dependent on hemodialysis. To develop appropriate support systems, health care workers need to understand the issues that caregivers face when caring for the family member who is dependent on hemodialysis. Further research should include the effects of exercise, spirituality, and the cultural differences for caregivers providing care for family members dependent upon hemodialysis. A longitudinal study examining long-term effects of caregiving with this population is warranted.

Abstract selected for presentation at 47th ANNA National Symposium, Louisville, KY, 2016