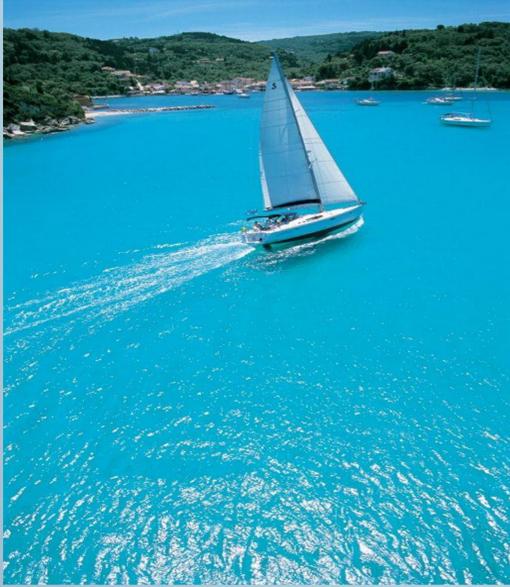


TRAVELLING AND HAEMODIALYSIS

Garofyllou G.¹, Kavalieratou A.¹

¹Konstantopoulou G.H. N. Ionia, Haemodialysis Unit, Athens, Greece



INTRODUCTION Haemodialysis which is a predominant method of treatment for patients with Chronic Renal Failure poses many restrictions on the patients' social life and their desire to travel away from home for a variety of reasons, such as family visits, holidays, education and work. These patients are restricted to travelling where they can have access to haemodialysis services, while they have to face their health condition as well as the fear and anxiety related to it.

AIM The purpose of this study was to examine the incidence of travelling by patients undergoing Chronic Haemodialysis.

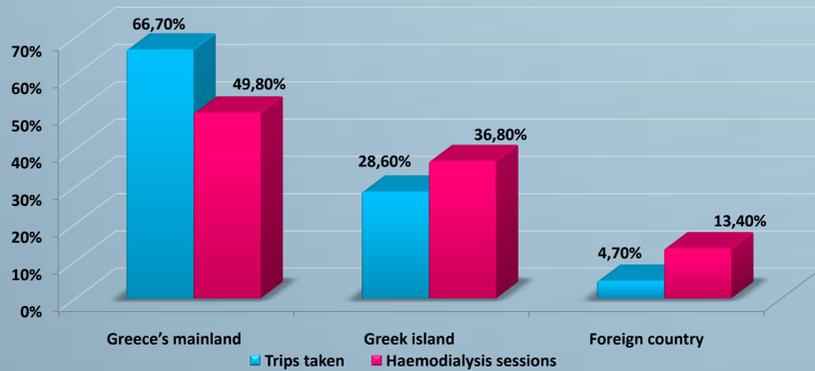
MATERIAL AND METHOD This is a descriptive study conducted at the Haemodialysis Unit of a public hospital in Athens, Greece, from May 2017 to August 2018. The study sample consisted of 41 patients undergoing Chronic Haemodialysis and the data concerning the travels were collected prospectively.

Gender		Age (years)		Marital status			Existence of children		Education (years)	
Male	Female	Mean	Min - Max	Single	Married	Divorced/Widowed	Yes	No	<9	>9
73,20%	26,80%	69,7± 12,16	45 – 88	4,90%	65,80%	29,30%	85%	15%	80,50%	19,50%

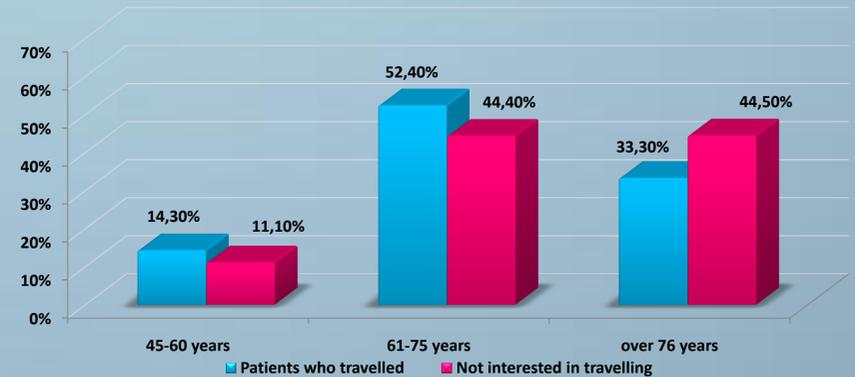
RESULTS

According to the study results, 51,2% of the patients travelled on 42 occasions. During these travels a total number of 299 haemodialysis sessions were performed, with a range of 1 to 39 sessions per travel. 66,7% of the trips' destination was a location on Greece's mainland, 28,6% a Greek island and 4,7% a foreign country. 78% of the patients stated that they wished to be able to travel and that travelling had a positive impact on their lives and their families, while 22% stated that they didn't wish to travel away from home. 88,9% of the patients that weren't interested in travelling were above 60 years of age.

HOLIDAY DIALYSIS

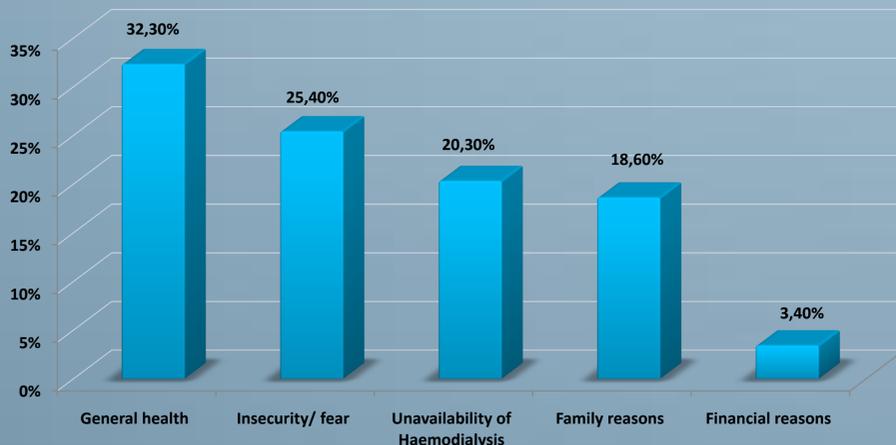


INTEREST IN TRAVELLING



The five main reasons that made travelling difficult for the patients of this study were General health, Insecurity/fear, Unavailability of another Haemodialysis unit, Family reasons and Financial reasons. For the patients between 45 to 60 years of age the main reasons for not travelling were Insecurity/fear and Family reasons, while for those above 60 years the main reason was General health.

REASONS FOR NOT TRAVELLING



PROBLEMS THAT OCCURRED DURING THE 42 TRIPS

- 1 Exit site infection of a central venous catheter
- 1 Graft failure due to thrombosis
- 1 Fall related injury
- 2 Patients stated they experienced problems during the haemodialysis session

DISCUSSION The latest medical developments regarding patients with Chronic Renal Failure aim at increasing their life expectancy and at improving the overall quality of their life². In our study the majority of the patients (78%) stated that travelling had a positive impact on their lives and their families. This finding is consistent to a study which reported that holiday haemodialysis treatments resulted to improved well-being of the patients as reflected by the decreased dialysis side effects.⁵ The trips taken by the patients of our sample were mostly limited to Greece with only a small percentage involving a different country within the European Union. This fact stated the patients' insecurity to travel too far away from their usual haemodialysis unit and was similar to another study that showed a small percentage of travelling of dialysis patients outside the EU⁴, but was also due to the diversity of the destinations in Greece especially during the summer. According to our study, half of the patients managed to travel away from home, while the predominant reasons for not travelling were General health (32.3%) and Insecurity/fear (25.4%). In a previous study it was observed that patients who are relatively healthy and active are more able to integrate dialysis within their lives than those with additional health problems, while the most difficult period of adjustment occurs in the first few months of starting haemodialysis.¹ During the 42 trips of our study, the problems that occurred are presented in the table above. In general, travelling for patients undergoing haemodialysis requires additional preventive measures.⁶ According to another study, travelling while on dialysis may lead to anemia and an increased risk of bacterial infection especially for the patients who dialyze through a central venous catheter, while there was no evidence to suggest that the travel destination influenced in any way the frequency of infections.⁴

CONCLUSIONS

Travelling is not uncommon among patients undergoing Chronic Haemodialysis despite the difficulties that it entails, such as arranging haemodialysis treatments away from home and assessing the risks and anxiety related to it. However, it can increase the patients' satisfaction and sense of emotional well-being, as well as that of their families'. Especially new patients often despair that their life is over and the opportunity therefore to go on holiday may significantly improve the quality of their life.

Hence, on a practical level it is important that health professionals:

- ❖ Encourage travelling if the patients' health condition allows it.
- ❖ Educate patients on avoiding complications while on holiday.
- ❖ Support them in making the necessary arrangements and overcoming their fears.
- ❖ Implement strategies to encourage patients in regaining their independence.

Taking a holiday can give a big boost to the patients' morale and self-confidence!