

Compassionate care at home

Portable dialysis liberates patients

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Robert Jones thought his gardening days were over.

The 64-year-old Vallejo resident developed chronic kidney failure 14 years ago, forcing him to visit



Grace Jones administers dialysis to her husband Robert Jones six times per week using an in-home portable hemodialysis machine. (Stacey J. Miller/Times-Herald)

hospitals three times a week for dialysis.

The time-consuming process - usually six hours a day, including travel time and waiting - left him fatigued and feeling "washed out," Jones said.

Things changed two years ago, when Jones said he and his wife learned about a Vallejo clinic offering new advances in kidney disease treatment.

These days he's feeling much better - and said he's back in his garden.

His secret?

A portable hemodialysis machine weighing about 70 pounds.

Rather than visit a hospital, Jones administers his own treatment while at night while he sleeps.

More frequent dialysis at home gives him more energy, he said, as his blood toxins are removed more quickly.

"I feel much better," Jones said, adding he's able to do the things he enjoys. "I can plant my garden now ... I couldn't do that before. I've got plants waiting to come up ... I put 'em in the ground on Good Friday."

Nationally, and in Solano County, studies show health conditions that contribute to kidney disease - obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes - are on the rise.

That's one reason Wellbound of Vallejo, a private clinic offering home-dialysis training, expects its patient list to grow from 28 to as many as 120 in the years to come.

Part of an expanding national chain, the Vallejo location opened its doors in 2006, said clinic manager and registered nurse Kathy Asimos.

The company partners with NxStage, whose \$20,000 home-dialysis machine cleared FDA approval in 2005.

"It allows the patient to take control of their disease," Asimos said, adding that most patients rent the machines and pay for it with Medicare. "It used to be that the patient's life revolved around the treatment. Now they can schedule the treatment around their life."

Paul Combes, a 22-year-old Vallejo resident who learned he had kidney disease four years ago, said the home-treatment has allowed him to feel "75 percent normal."

"I used to feel less than half normal," said Combes, a good-natured Hogan High School graduate who said he was born with a condition that led to kidney failure at a rare young age.

"I feel a lot better," Combes said. "I've picked up golfing."

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