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Taking home the machine: learning self care dialysis



(http://www.abc.net.au/reslib/200711/r200491_767533.jpg)

Brogas has to monitor and record his blood pressure, heart rate and other details as part of his self care.

(ABC Local radio: Nicole Lee)

Sticking large needles in your body and hooking yourself up to a machine that filters your blood for five hours, is no easy task. But it's something Brogas Tjapanardi has been learning for the last year.

By January, Brogas hopes to be the first person in Central Australia to undertake self care from his home in Hermannsburg, east of Alice Springs.

Diagnosed with renal failure in 1994, Brogas says being able to take control of his dialysis has changed his life.

"Sisters used to put the needle in before and now I'm doing it myself. I can put a needle in, linings, I can do everything myself. It's really good."

After first learning self care at the Renal Unit in Alice Springs, Brogas now completes his self care Western Desert Dialysis. With his own key to the facility, Brogas lets himself in and hooks himself up to the machine. He keeps a detailed record of his blood pressure, heart rate and monitors the machine for problems. Sarah Brown, Manager of Western Desert Dialysis says being able to take control of his health has transformed Brogas.

"We've seen Brogas' self confidence and general sense of well being improve significantly. If you feel like you've got some control over your life and health then that has an enormous influence."

Brogas is one of a growing number of Aboriginal people in Central Australia with renal failure. Many live in remote communities and have to make the move into Alice Springs for medical facilities. Facing a lack of accommodation when they arrive in town many end up living in town camps or staying with relatives. Sarah Brown from Western Desert Dialysis describes the affect this dislocation can have on people's health.

"Our mob have described moving to Alice - it's a one way ticket to town and home for your own funeral. So people really feel dislocated from the life they've known and as if there's no purpose to their lives any more apart from dialysis."

As for Brogas, he's looking forward to giving up the city life and heading back to his community. Once back home his wife will help him with the dialysis and there will be a phone line to Renal Unit in case of any problems.

"I'm looking forward to going back to Hermannsburg. I've been here nearly three years you know. I like living in the bush, my community. It's a little bit boring when you sit in the dialysis for five hours."

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