

Making the best of an unexpected diagnosis

William Lee Davis | Portland, OR

William was diagnosed with kidney disease after going to the doctor for something completely different. Following a few regular tests, his lab work came back and alarmed his doctor.

"I didn't have any signs or symptoms that could have led to kidney disease, but when I went to the doctor for something else, he told me I should see a nephrologist right away."

Fortunately, the first nephrologist that William saw was one he liked. But the news he delivered was stunning: William was in kidney failure.

"I really liked him; he was more personable than medical," William said. "He told me I was in kidney failure, and I didn't even know. I was working 70 hours a week at the time and never noticed any problems."



Navigating huge life changes with a solid support system

Early kidney disease usually doesn't have any symptoms and symptoms of ESRD are similar to other conditions. Therefore, kidney disease is often missed even though there are simple tests that can diagnose ESRD. Including coverage of kidney disease screening in wellness visits would drastically improve rates of early diagnosis of ESRD.

At first, William was put on peritoneal dialysis, which is a treatment for kidney failure that uses the lining of your abdomen. But soon he found his body needed hemodialysis and was admitted to the hospital.

The treatment worked – and he sought to transition to home hemodialysis as soon as possible. The training for home hemodialysis was intense; more than five weeks of visits and practice. Through it all, William had a great support system.

"My wife has been so supportive of me the whole time," he said. "She should really be doing this interview."

Dialysis is a difficult treatment cycle, but there is hope for a transplant

"It's all-encompassing fatigue," he described.

There is hope for an end to the cycle, though. William jumped through "all the hoops" to get evaluated for a transplant. The final test is with a cardiologist, which is coming up soon. In the meantime, he is working to manage his diagnosis as best as possible.

"It's as difficult as you make it," he said. "If you eat horribly and don't pay attention to your doctors, it's going to be difficult. But there are ways to manage it successfully and live a good life."

Home dialysis provides many benefits, including:

- Greater lifestyle flexibility and independence.
- A less restricted diet.
- Longer lasting residual kidney function.