



A PD Partnership—for Life

Peritoneal dialysis (PD) presents a new challenge not only for you as a patient, but for your partner and/or family, as well. For 66-year-old Larry, a positive approach has made all the difference. “We’re not as happy as if we were free of diabetes and kidney disease, but we’re happy!” says Larry, whose wife of 49 years, Janet, has been on PD for 2 years.

Life with Chronic Disease

Since early in their marriage, chronic disease has played a part in Janet and Larry’s life. Janet has been an insulin-dependent diabetic for 47 years—since the birth of their second daughter. Over the years, she has had multiple eye surgeries, and in 2002 was diagnosed with kidney failure. With the onset of kidney failure, Larry immediately took on an assistant’s role. “When you live with someone who has a chronic disease you get used to the monitoring,” says Larry. “Once Janet’s kidneys failed, I wanted to pitch in—it didn’t seem fair that everything was dumped in her lap.”

Choosing PD

For Larry and Janet, PD was the best treatment option. “Once she was diagnosed with kidney failure, our choice was PD,” explains Larry. “We wanted dialysis to be a lot less intrusive on our daily routine. PD gives you more flexibility and allows you to make decisions about how to work dialysis into the family structure.” Janet monitors her daily diabetic routine while Larry monitors her PD.

“I have a chart that tracks Janet’s weight, blood pressure, and glucose levels at various times of day,” he explains. “We’re thankful that PD exists and that we can continue to make a life out of what could have been the end.”

The Adjustment Period

Larry and Janet did have to adjust to their new life with PD, but never sought outside support. “Janet doesn’t like change and I knew PD would be a big change,” says Larry. “We became our own support group. For us, how to deal with it and get the job done was most important.”

Of course, there are times when Larry worries about making a mistake, but he knows that their PD nurse, Nancy, is



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just a phone call away. “I’ve gotten Janet dehydrated on two occasions and had to go to the ER,” he reports. “But we try not to second guess ourselves, and challenge ourselves to do better.”

Changes

In 2003, Janet switched to a cyclor. “She wasn’t getting enough dialysis and we needed to add another exchange. We already had a breakfast, lunch, dinner, and pre-bed routine and didn’t want to add a fifth exchange,” explains Larry. Initially, Janet and Larry thought the cyclor noise would bother them, but they’ve found that it doesn’t. “At 6:00 a.m. the cyclor shuts off and the *lack* of noise wakes us up!” he reports. “It’s hard to believe, but your body tunes into the environment.”

Using the cyclor did require some changes in their home structure and routine. “We have a big master bedroom upstairs, but had to move to the smaller bedroom downstairs to be near the bathroom,” explains Larry.

Due to Janet’s multiple conditions, Larry has also taken on most of the household work. “Laundry is not gender specific—anybody can put clothes and soap in a machine then dry and fold the laundry!” says Larry. “Anything Janet can’t do, I step up and do instead; I’m an able-bodied person and now it’s my job to do it.”

Accepting the Situation

Larry and Janet have accepted the new challenges in their life with energy and

a positive attitude. “Immerse yourself enthusiastically by asking questions and getting details until you understand the requirements,” says Larry. “When you have a problem like this, you are your own solution—you have to wrestle it to the ground and get a grip on it.”

Larry and Janet have certainly got a grip on their married life with diabetes and PD. “PD is a lifesaving experience,” says Larry. “Put that at the front of your mind and don’t be anything but enthusiastic about PD!”

Having a Hard Time Coping?

If you and your loved ones are adjusting to life on PD, talk to a social worker or counselor. You can also check the following resources for help:

- Dialysis_Support mail list (to subscribe to this on-line support group, send an e-mail to dialysis_support-subscribe@yahoo.com or visit their website at groups.yahoo.com/group/dialysis_support/)
- *Kidney School: Coping with Kidney Disease* at www.kidneyschool.org

The most important thing you can do is stay involved in life. Whether by working, volunteering for community events, or by playing games with your family and friends, staying active can help you keep a positive attitude about life with PD, and help those you love realize that you are still *you!*

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