In June I attended the Renal Society Association Annual Conference in Auckland, New Zealand. My purpose to attend this conference was to network with other renal professionals as well as partake in the conference presentations to gain more knowledge/skills practiced by my colleagues.

The keynote speaker Nigel Latte presented on “Hard questions for stone aged brains” an interesting insight on how the human brain works. Our life is becoming more and more complex (we make 35,000 decisions a day) and with our busy and demanding life interactions with others we usually respond with emotions (anger, frustration, fatigue and stress). With our life becoming complex it’s more important to make it simpler and not get hung up on life tribulations and trails. The lessons learned is to bypass the frustrating emotions with calmness, empathy, openness and kindness. Avoid friction by making it easier for people to do what you want them to do. Think clearly, we need to STOP AND THINK AND STAY CALM and the most important is MINDFULNESS. And the most important of all is to BE KIND. The presentation made me think about myself and remembering the simple things like being KIND in my daily interactions.

“Bring on the patient revolution” by Mia Carroll was phenomenal, showcasing how the health industry has become industrialised rather than people centred collaborative care. Mia’s talk highlighted how industrial healthcare has corrupted the healthcare mission to stop caring for our patients. Mia proposed in her talk a revolution of compassion and solidarity, of unhurried conversations and of careful and kind care. Mia’s talk made me reflect if our interactions with our patients are healing or harmful to them. Her talk made me re-evaluate the current practices with our patients that reminded me why I became a Nurse and providing patient centred holistic care of them and not always rushing to complete the tasks.
Another interesting presentation was “Fluid assessment is hard in the obese - challenging case of 31L of fluid ultra-filtrated on haemodialysis (HD) over two days”, which showcased a unit’s experience of fluid removal in an obese patient who was admitted in ICU with hypoxia and hypotension. Patient was estimated to be 21L over dry weight. The staff managed to remove 31L over two days with support from inotropes and non-invasive ventilation. This case study highlighted the difficulty in assessing ideal body weight of obese patients and staff uncertainty in assessing their weights. On the opposite spectrum the presentation of “I am 41kg”, “no you are 41.5kg”: Challenges in providing haemodialysis in a patient with an eating disorder. This presentation emphasized on the patients with an eating disorder on renal replacement therapy (HD & PD) which may exacerbate the disorder by 1. Constant weighing pre and post treatment, 2. The constant reinforcement by dialysis staff about the importance of adhering to fluid and dietary restrictions 3. The limited understanding of the difference fluid weight and flesh weight. This two presentation showcases the two spectrums of patients that we care in our renal units and as a nurse we have advocate on their behalf. Each patient is different, and this highlights the importance of treating our patient’s individually rather than the concept of 1 fits all. This shows us the importance of staff awareness and education in management of individual patients.

“Independent community dialysis houses - A home away from home” by Rachael Walker highlighted the benefits of independent dialysis houses in our community. These dialysis houses are for patients who have been trained for home dialysis but don’t have facilities to have dialysis at home due to space or other constraints. The community dialysis houses have 2 dialysis machines installed in a community house. The patients dialysing in the houses have their schedules and they come and have their dialysis treatment and then it’s ready for the next person. This is a great opportunity for our nephrology service to expand in this regard.

The different presentations on vascular access was an eye opener as it highlights the importance of the access for haemodialysis. Also informative with new advances of grafts and techniques being used currently. The trade displays were also very interesting; it was good to be able to view the different dialysis machines and different trade displays.

The takeaway message for me was to:

1. Be kind to one another
2. To always assess my actions. Are they beneficial or doing harm as dialysis becomes very institutionalised and routine?
3. Being a dialysis nurse not to purely focus on the numbers (weight) but provide individualised holistic care.

I would definitely recommend the conference to my colleagues as it’s a great platform to liaise and network with other renal professionals. It was a good opportunity to expand and explore innovative renal practices. The presentations help to build on our current knowledge and explore the different possibilities. The poster displays were very informative with different case studies and presentations.