

Sustainability in healthcare: dialysis services

Guidance note

Overview

The Victorian Government is committed to improving environmental sustainability in the delivery of healthcare services. In promoting more sustainable dialysis services, health services are encouraged to consider actions to reduce the environmental impacts associated with the delivery of these services. Environmental impacts associated with dialysis services typically relate to energy and water consumption, waste generation and procurement of necessary materials and equipment.

The benefits of environmentally sustainable dialysis services include reduction in energy and water usage, reduced generation of waste, reduced greenhouse gases emissions, and reduced expenditure on utilities.

This guidance note is intended to assist dialysis services staff to improve the environmental sustainability within their health service. The guidance note provides an overview of sustainability related information and reference to existing requirements, programs and external resources.

Environmental Management Planning

An integral part of embedding sustainability within the public health system is the adoption of appropriate environmental management planning processes at the health service level.

As part of the policy and funding guidelines, the department requires all public health services to prepare environmental management plans and to publically report environmental performance. Dialysis services should be considered when developing organisational environmental management plans, which identify key areas for reducing environmental impacts across the operations of the organisation.

Each health service has a nominated contact for environmental management planning and many have an environmental management committee. If you are unsure of the contact in your organisation, please contact the Department of Health at www.health.vic.gov.au/sustainability/contacts.htm.

Further information on the guidelines and environmental management planning are available from www.health.vic.gov.au/sustainability/programs.htm.

Renal Directions and Environmental Sustainability

Renal directions: Better services and improved kidney health for Victorians was released in May 2013 and applies the objectives and priorities of the Victorian Government to the specific improvement of services for people both at risk of or currently experiencing chronic kidney disease. This document aims to improve provision of renal services and to make sure the renal system remains sustainable. One of the key directions of this document (direction 4) is to strengthen and sustain renal services including ensuring environmental sustainability of dialysis services.

Actions under this direction include:

- Incorporating water and energy efficient strategies into designs for all new or redeveloped renal facilities, and
- Consideration of energy, water and waste management associated with the dialysis process in both health services and the residential setting.

Guidelines for water reuse and recycling in healthcare facilities

Health services considering the use of water reuse or recycling are recommended to consult the departmental guidelines on water reuse and recycling. The guidelines outline a risk management based approach to water reuse. The guidelines are available at www.health.vic.gov.au/water/alternative/resources.htm.

Following the guidelines will ensure proper processes are in place and that water reuse projects are able to be implemented efficiently and effectively.

These guidelines were utilised in the implementation of 16 projects completed as part of the Greening our Hospitals Program, which primarily involved the collection of reject water from reverse osmosis and saved approximately 24,000 kilolitres per year. This program is now complete but case studies of projects implemented are available at www.health.vic.gov.au/sustainability/water/greening.htm.

Greener Government Buildings

The Greener Government Buildings program enables the delivery of significant energy and water efficiency investment in existing facilities through an energy performance contract with an Energy Service Company. The department is rolling out the program to 27 health services. Given that the program looks at energy and water savings across the health service, facilities that deliver dialysis services are likely to be included within the scope of the program. Information on the program is at www.health.vic.gov.au/sustainability/energy/epc.htm.

Sustainability in Capital Works

The department's sustainability guidelines outline the requirements and processes that apply to healthcare capital works projects delivered by the Department of Health. It is expected that health services also follow these guidelines when implementing self-managed projects.

In respect to dialysis, the guidelines require that reject water from reverse osmosis is collected and reused where feasible. Further information is available at www.health.vic.gov.au/sustainability/capital.htm.

Additional resources

There are a number of resources that health services may find useful and informative in improving the environmental sustainability of their dialysis services.

The Barwon Health Renal Service has established a website (<http://greendialysis.org/>) to share information around sustainable dialysis practices. The information on the website is based on developmental work that the Barwon Health Renal Service has undertaken to reduce its environmental impacts. The site also contains related references and resources and provides a roadmap for improving the environmental performance of health services.

The Environmental Guidelines for Dialysis is a practical guide to reduce the environmental burden of dialysis. The guideline was published by the European Dialysis and Transplant Nurses Association/European Renal Care Association (EDTNA/ERCA) published in September 2011. Further information is available at www.edtnerca.org.

Information on sustainable procurement is available on the Health Purchasing Victoria website: www.hpv.org.au/sustainable-procurement/275-sustainable-procurement-in-healthcare

Further information on environmental sustainability within the public health care system is also available at www.health.vic.gov.au/sustainability.