

# The Power of Innovation

A health care system to meet our needs  
**NSW Health**  
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## Patient Controlled Fluid Allowance, Category 3: Empowering Patients

### Introduction

This project worked with the identified patient group to develop communication through education and to improve patient outcomes. This involved working with the patient to identify the point at which they could manage their own Fluid Allowance.

Changes that were made to the information available to patients when assessing their fluid intake, which improved their understanding and provided patient control over the types of fluids consumed.

With the development of a patient-focused fluid balance chart, this brought improved usability and compliance, and provided patients with direct influence on the process.

The process also improved engagement between patient and clinician, as they work together toward managing the fluid allowance.

### Aim

To empower our patients in controlling and understanding their own daily fluid balance and allowance.

To enhance the knowledge of nursing staff in providing education for patients and highlight the importance of correct documentation of fluid balance.



Cardiology Nursing Team working together to identify limitations in monitoring patient fluid restrictions. From these sessions, The Fluid Allowance Project was initiated.

### Method

Cardiology at Nepean Hospital has been involved with the Essentials Of Care (EOC) program for about four and a half years. We have been addressing numerous initiatives but none have had such a significant impact, involving the patient as 'the patient controlled fluid balance project'.

In May 2011 staff identified through the assessment phase of essentials of care that we had some concerns regarding documentation of our fluid balance charting. After several EOC meetings using different practice development approaches we agreed to overhaul the current practises surrounding how we captured our patient's fluid balance.

We identified the importance of involving our patients in the decision making process regarding their daily fluid balance. As a result we have changed our current practises and through person centeredness, given our patients ownership and control of their own well being.

In partnership with the nurses all heart failure patients are empowered to monitor their own fluid status. This is achieved through education and collaboration with our patients until they feel confident in managing their own fluid balance at home.



Recognising the value of self monitoring, this patient requested to be involved in the initial roll-out of the Fluid Allowance program

### Results

Since implementation of Patient Controlled Fluid Allowance our documentation audits have shown an improvement in compliance rates from 75% to averaging 95% in completion of fluid balance charts.

Both staff and patients have embraced this change. We have asked our patients for feedback, *see below comments*. Casual staff have also embraced the change, remarking how it allows the patient to be involved in the decision making process and ensures fluid balance is accurate. We have some anecdotal evidence that it is reducing the re-admission status of our chronic CCF patients.

*"Oh I've always wondered how much fluid was in this- I didn't know I had to include yoghurt..." from a patient*

*"I like how you don't come around and bug me about what I've had to drink...I always make it up anyway" ....from a patient that was continually asked what he had to drink hours after he had breakfast, he simply made it up because he forgot.*

*"I no longer feel dizzy in the morning as I have enough fluid for breakfast"... from a patient.*

*"I'm really glad this took off as it's more accurate and meaningful for them", from a staff member.*



Staff involved in educating patients on the Fluid Allowance program

### Conclusion

People are empowered when they have enough knowledge to make decisions that effect them. With sufficient control and skill, our patients with CCF can begin to gain mastery over their disease, helping them in the development of a self-management plan, keeping patients feeling well and at home at much as possible.

It was the patient and staff involvement that has made this project such a success. As patients now record and manage their own allowance each day, and staff access to more accurate fluid status. This in turn aids greater decision making in their day-to-day medical management.

Staff are fully engaged in innovative solutions and are motivated to continue to participate in improvement projects. Patient Controlled Fluid Allowance has become standardised practice in Cardiology.

### Acknowledgements

Nursing Staff and Patients of Cardiology, Nepean Hospital.



Staff member proudly showing their support for this patient-empowering program