

Profiles in Kidney Care – May 2008

Laurie Ledger, Northern Health Renal Program

On a whim seven years ago, Laurie Ledger submitted an application to the Northern Health Renal Program. She was visiting her father in Prince George and loved the laid back lifestyle and the lack of traffic. “Quite a change from Highway 401!” she laughs, referring to the freeway she drove daily in Ontario.

When she got home, there was already a phone message waiting – it was Northern Health, requesting an interview. That was spring, and by September she was working in Prince George as a staff nurse in the hemodialysis unit. When the head nurse was taken ill, Laurie took over until August 2006 at which point she was offered the position of acting renal manager - and finally, permanent renal manager. Next month, she celebrates one year in the latter job.



“I love the outdoor lifestyle and the sense of community in Prince George,” says Laurie, whose 28-year-old engineer son still lives in Toronto. “And I work with a very committed and engaged team—I feel truly blessed to lead such a great group of health care professionals.”

Laurie was no stranger to Prince George, having lived there with her parents and graduating as a registered nurse from the College of New Caledonia in 1983. She moved to Ontario soon after that,

however, completing a nephrology certificate at Toronto’s Humber College and then working as a hemodialysis nurse in Oshawa for several years.

Back in Prince George, she oversees about 40 staff at the hospital and six each at the Terrace and Fort St. John community dialysis units. Prince George Hospital staff manage home and hospital hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, and CKD, vascular access and transplant clinics. In early May, a new independent care unit opens up at Parkwood Plaza, close to the hospital but a very different setting, says Laurie.

“We’re starting with ten patients three days a week,” she explains. “Three more people are in training so we’ll be expanding the hours.” Home hemodialysis patients will be trained at the new clinic too, and the renal team will turn the old hospital self-care unit into a



transitional space, for people who are not quite ready for home dialysis or full self-care, but want to do more of their care themselves.

“We see this as a great opportunity to encourage independence,” says Laurie. Other priorities for the program are groups sessions with CKD patients; peritoneal dialysis outreach (for instance in long term care facilities), and – perhaps most important – recruitment.

“Five years from now we’ll have quite a few people retiring, so we’re fostering our relationship with the University of Northern BC,” says Laurie. “Bringing in undergrads for internships and preceptor opportunities, and getting them interested in renal care early, is really important for program sustainability.”