SOMETIMES PATIENTS JUST NEED SOMEONE TO LISTEN

SPECIALIST CARE GETS ME HOME. KEEPS ME HOME.
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*Iris McLachlan*, a Nutricia Enteral Nurse Specialist, describes how this applies to her patients in Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland.

“*Every day is different and a phone call can completely change my diary.*” Iris explains. Recently, for example, a district nurse called to tell Iris that a patient had run out of sterile water to flush the tube. Iris delivered the water, which meant making a 60-mile roundtrip. “*Tubes that fall out have to be replaced at home within two hours or the patient needs to be admitted. A dislodged tube can also be traumatic for patients and carers,*” Iris says. “*So, I sometimes have to drop everything to replace a tube. Importantly, this means that the patient doesn’t need to go to A&E, which saves the NHS the cost this incurs. But I’m not only there to deal with a tube or pump issue. Sometimes, patients just need someone to listen to them.*”

Over the years, Iris has become firmly embedded as a specialist in the enteral feeding pathway within the local multidisciplinary team. “*My NHS colleagues regard me as part of the multidisciplinary team.*” For example, Iris has helped write the new enteral feeding guidelines for Dumfries and Galloway and attends multidisciplinary team meetings. “*Although I work outside the NHS I still have the opportunity to work closely and liaise with dietitians, consultants and district nurses to discuss the needs of in-patients and those in the community.*”

Iris also trains, educates and advises healthcare professionals, patients, family members and other carers, such as support workers and nursery or school teams. “*Good pre-discharge training can make a big difference to the patients’ and carers’ ability to deal with enteral feeding.*”

For Iris, patient contact is the key to her job satisfaction. Iris explains with a smile, “*As a nurse, I can make such as difference to a patient’s life. And while that often means dealing with pump problems, blockages and dislodged tubes, it also means taking the time to listen.*”