“PATIENT, TEACH THYSELF.” It’s one of Lori Hartwell’s many messages to individuals doing battle with chronic illness, including renal disease. Patients can do more to improve their quality of life if they recognize the power that they have to control it—even while battling kidney failure.

But there is a message for caregivers, too. Renal professionals need to understand the challenges that patients face—challenges beyond simply getting into the dialysis chair three times a week. These other challenges are personal: grappling with the finality of a chronic illness; protecting self-esteem among peers and family; maintaining their place in the household; and dealing with changes in sexuality.

Now, Hartwell’s efforts to bridge the gap between patients and their care providers has earned her the 2003 Quality of Life Award from Nephrology News & Issues (NN&I). Hartwell was selected by a panel of judges from NN&I’s Editorial Advisory Board. The award comes with a $1,000 stipend to be donated to a nonprofit organization of her choice.

NN&I introduced the Quality of Life award in 1990 as a means of recognizing an individual, company, or organization that contributed to improving the quality of life for individuals with end-stage renal disease. NN&I presented its first award to Amgen Inc. and their team of scientists responsible for the discovery and development of human recombinant erythropoietin.

In their nomination of Hartwell, Maria Karalis, MBA, RD, LD, and Sandie Guerra Dean, LCSW, said Hartwell’s accomplishments “serve as a positive example for dialysis patients and health care professionals. She consistently strives to eliminate low expectations of people who have a chronic illness.”

Karalis and Dean describe Hartwell as a “successful, articulate, and funny young woman” who has “used her life experience to provide encouragement and hope to others living with chronic illness and to educate those in health care about what patients need most from them.” Further, she has helped many with chronic illness “to gain the confidence to become active participants in their health care and to set goals for themselves that bring satisfaction, purpose, and meaning to their lives.”

KEEPING BUSY

Hartwell was first diagnosed with kidney failure at age two. She has been on peritoneal dialysis, hemodialysis, and has had three kidney transplants. The last one, performed in 1990, has been successful.

Hartwell has reached out to the renal patient and caregiver community in a number of ways:
• Her latest book, Chronically Happy—Joyful Living in Spite of Chronic Illness, details her own path through chronic illness and dispenses helpful thoughts and advice for patients facing the same uphill challenges.
• She understands the technical side of nephrology, having worked in the renal care industry for five years. Over the years, she has spent time in over 500 dialysis clinics.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Chronically Motivated
Hartwell Works 24/7 to Improve the Patient-Caregiver Relationship

Mark E. Neumann
“YOU HAVE TO LET PATIENTS IN YOUR WORLD”

In *Chronically Happy*, Hartwell walks through her anxieties and difficulties in dealing with chronic illness, identifying the phases that patients often experience in dealing with disease. In one chapter, she describes her dream doctor — ingredients that all physicians should strive for and all patients should expect. While she encourages readers to write their own lists, she suggests that good doctors should:

- treat the patient as an individual and not cookie-cut him or her into a plan that works for the doctor
- never be threatened by a second opinion, because “a second opinion does not question a doctor’s intelligence; it simply gives patients confirmation that they are on the right track”
- speak to the patient as an equal
- look the patient in the eye when he or she is speaking
- employ a staff that is professional, organized, and pleasant
- be an expert in his or her specialty
- be reliable and on time
- make the patient feel comfortable during an examination or while talking about personal or embarrassing issues
- understand that this is the patient’s time to address personal health care issues, so the doctor should not take phone calls or have a hand on the doorknob while talking to him or her
- provide the patient with educational material to better understand his or her condition

Looking at “Quality” in a Different Way

After 14 years of identifying “unsung heroes” in the renal community deserving of the Quality of Life Award, *NN&I* is retiring the award this year. Since 1990, *NN&I* has made $14,000 in donations to charitable organizations identified by Quality of Life Award winners. We are proud of our contributions and hope the renal community has benefited. *NN&I* is formulating the criteria for a new award for the renal community. Look for an opportunity for nominations this spring.

Mark E. Neumann
Executive Editor