Multiple-frequency bioimpedance devices for fluid management in people with chronic kidney disease receiving dialysis: a systematic review and economic evaluation

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Declared competing interests of authors: none

Published January 2018
DOI: 10.3310/hta22010

Plain English summary

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Health Technology Assessment 2018; Vol. 22: No. 1
DOI: 10.3310/hta22010

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People undergo dialysis because of kidney problems. During dialysis, it is important to check the volume of fluid being removed, as removing too much or not enough fluid can cause serious health problems. Assessment of fluid levels in people receiving dialysis has traditionally been done by doctors and medical staff using their expertise and judgement, but this can be inaccurate. Recently, a type of technical device (called a multifrequency bioimpedance device) has been introduced to estimate a person’s fluid level by sending painless electrical currents through the body by way of pads, which are placed on certain parts of the body (e.g. the hand and foot). This assessment looked at all clinical studies comparing the use of such devices with doctors’ judgement in assessing the fluid levels of people receiving dialysis. Results from 13 clinical studies assessing 5819 adults showed that the use of these bioimpedance devices reduced overhydration levels, but blood pressure, arterial stiffness (the heart has to work harder to pump blood through stiffer arteries and stiffness can mean an increased risk of negative events such as heart attacks) and the number of deaths were similar regardless of the method of fluid assessment. The cost of using these devices was too high for the NHS budget when the actual costs of dialysis were included in the economic evaluation, but was acceptable when dialysis costs were not taken into account. The quality of the studies was generally poor and only one device was used by all the studies. In addition, the long-term effects of using these devices have yet to be established. It would be useful if dialysis centres, which have introduced the use of these devices in their routine practice, could provide further information on the effects of bioimpedance devices on people receiving dialysis over an extended period of time.
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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was commissioned and funded by the HTA programme on behalf of NICE as project number 15/17/07. The protocol was agreed in June 2016. The assessment report began editorial review in December 2016 and was accepted for publication in May 2017. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HTA editors and publisher have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health.

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