Life threatening haemorrhage during home haemodialysis treatment

Two patients required admission to hospital following blood loss from a haemodialysis circuit at home associated with a several g/dl fall in haemoglobin. The cause of the blood loss was failure by the patient to properly attach the dialysis line to the dialyser during assembly. This was a patient rather than an equipment problem.

The rate of blood loss was too slow to trigger any pressure alarms however as the leak was out of line of sight of the patient whilst dialysing the patient was unaware of the leak until they became symptomatically hypotensive. Permanent patient harm was only avoided due to the prompt intervention of a third party.

Action

- All patients need to be regularly reminded about the need to take care when assembling dialysis equipment.
- All blood containing elements of the dialysis circuit should be clearly visible to the patient during dialysis.
- Patients should check for blood leaks once dialysis has commenced.

Please submit comments, solutions, and personal experience to:

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