

A SCOTTISH pensioner has travelled the equivalent of more than twice round the world in two years to access dialysis treatment from the NHS.

Mary McKay, 75, has clocked up a staggering 66,932 road miles to access the treatment she needs three times a week.

The grandmother had no choice but to make the long journey from her home in Campbeltown to the Vale of Leven Hospital in Alexandria, because there was no dialysis unit in Argyll. Having travelled 690 miles a week to and from the Vale of Leven for 17 and a half months – and even further to Glasgow's Western and Royal infirmaries for earlier dialysis sessions – Mrs McKay says it's an experience no-one else should ever have to endure.

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She said: "I have never been abroad. But when the miles are added up, for my dialysis treatment, I have been round the world twice – and didn't know it."

Mrs McKay, who had to leave her house at 8:30am for the hospital journey and didn't get back home until 8pm, said: "For nearly two years I have been on dialysis and all the travelling going down the road and back three times a week was exhausting, I know how I felt, it was horrendous. I was tired all the time."

Now, after a community led campaign raised more than £100,000 in a year, a new dialysis unit has opened for business at Campbeltown Hospital.

Mrs McKay said: "It's only two or three minutes for me to get there by Red Cross car now. It's great."

Her husband, Neil, said: "She is over the moon now, it was terrible what she had to do before, I

got in touch with politicians from all the parties to try and get something done.”

While space was available for a unit in Campbeltown Hospital, the cash-strapped health board, which has trained specialist staff for the new unit, was short of cash to buy the necessary equipment. Donald Kelly, chairman of Kintyre Dialysis Campaign Group, said the community response had been amazing.

He said: “This is the fastest ever dialysis campaign, raising £100,000 in a year. But I feel quite strongly that the NHS should be providing this kind of unit. If there is a requirement for a service in a particular area I think the NHS should be providing it, it shouldn't be up to the community to self fund.”

Stephen Whiston, head of planning, contracting and performance at NHS Highland, said: ““This is a pilot project and we will need to evaluate clinical outcomes for our patients, demand and utilisation across the area and ongoing financial resources. Should this model of service prove to be successful we can see it being appropriate for other parts of rural Scotland.”

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