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PAC Chairs Speak

A NEWSLETTER FOR PATIENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

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Washing your hands

by Monica Richter, PAC Chair, Queens, NY

It is very important for you to wash your hands to prevent the spread of infections. Spreading infection could be stopped simply by washing your hands. You should also wash your access before dialysis starts. **This is your lifeline.**

When you are at dialysis before sitting down, you should make sure your area is clean. You are going to be sitting in that chair for about 4 hours or longer. You should get your stuff out. I have always had hand sanitizer at my table. After I made sure that my table and chair were clean and all of my stuff was where I wanted it to be, I then went to wash my hands then access (fistula/graft).



Monica Richter is the co co-chair for Queens, and has been a kidney patient for the last 20 years. She was on Hemodialysis and PD before receiving a new kidney in 2008.

In her own words:

“After my first kidney transplant failed, I was able to work while going through Hemodialysis in-center and PD. I do have a new kidney from a deceased donor which I am so thankful for. It has been 3 wonderful years of just feeling healthy. I have been sick since I was born, but did not find out why for the first fourteen years of my life. I am now 53 years old, and am enjoying every bit of life. At first, I was a shy and quiet, just listening and trying to help people along with the whole process. I did get very interested in IPRO and ESRD, and a few years ago, I went from being a PAC Rep to being the PAC Chair for Queens.”

You should wash your hands first. If you have a fistula or graft in your arm, you should wash that arm including your entire access and then rinse it well. The perfect way to wash your hands is to wet them first, then use soap to lather them up nice, then roughly and forcefully scrub to get the soap into all nicks and crevices. You should also pay attention to your thumbs and finger nails. Many people overlook them.

When you keep your hands and access clean, you reduce the risk of infection. You should try very hard to keep that site very clean. Dialysis staff should wash their hands before touching you and the next patient. Don't be afraid to talk about proper hand washing with your healthcare team. Staff should make washing their hands a priority. If your nurse or technician did not wash their hands, before they start to put you on dialysis, you should ask them to wash their hands.

There is an excellent resource for dialysis facility staff in the Hand Hygiene section of the Five Diamond Approach to Patient Safety. If your facility is not already using this program, you can suggest it to your Nurse Manager and technicians. Here is a link to the program on the Network's website: <http://www.ipro.org/index/hand-hygiene>

How to Handle a Problem at Your Dialysis Clinic

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Problems sometimes arise at dialysis. Being on dialysis and dependent on a machine and clinic staff can be stressful. At the same time, many staff feel pressured to do a difficult and demanding job on a tight schedule. With all that stress and pressure, it's no wonder that patients and staff do not always see eye to eye.

Build Relationships

You're much more likely to avoid conflicts if you have honest, trusting relationships with the staff who work with you at the dialysis clinic. Treating the nurses and techs like people, not simply "your" caregivers, is a good start. Keep the golden rule—treat others the way you'd like to be treated—in mind as a starting place.

Speak Up

Treating staff members with respect, and expecting them to do the same for you, does not mean that you should keep concerns to yourself. On the contrary! Let staff members know if you're having a problem. The key to speaking up lies in how you do it.

Here are some tips:

- Pick a good time, if you can. "When you have a minute, I'd like to talk."
- Stay calm and reasonable. Don't raise your voice.
- Be specific. Describe the problem and say how it makes you feel.
- Use "I" statements like "When my treatments don't start on time, I feel like the clinic doesn't respect my time."
- Talk about the behavior not the person. For example, "I prefer the TV volume to be set on low," rather than "You turn the TV volume too loud."
- Avoid "you" statements like "You always start my treatment late."
- Match your body language to your words. Don't smile if you're angry.

Follow Procedures

Preventing problems is always better than trying to fix them. But, if you do have a problem, it is important to deal with it in the right way. Your clinic has a process for making complaints. Be sure you know what it is—and follow the steps. Because you will be expected to provide specifics, write down all the details of your complaint, including dates, times, what happened, who was involved, what was said, and how you tried to solve the problem.

If you feel that you are not being heard, follow your facility's grievance procedure, Speak with your facility's PAC Rep (if available) and if that is unsatisfactory, call the IPRO ESRD Network of New York: 1 800 238-3773

ESRD Network PAC Chairpersons

Advisor at large.....	Dawn Edwards
Albany.....	Kathe LeBeau, Osmond Adams
Bronx.....	Vivian Davis
Brooklyn.....	Wendy Rivers, Warren Edmonds
Buffalo.....	Shane Deitz, Frank Ireland
Hudson Valley.....	open
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Staten Island.....	Larry Wilson, Nelson Nunez
Nassau County.....	James Martinez
Queens.....	Monica Richter, Elizabeth Credle
Rochester.....	open
Suffolk.....	Pete Savage
Syracuse.....	Sue Burns, Richard Atkinson

These PAC Chairpersons oversee the activities of the PAC Representatives in local facilities. PAC Chairs are happy to come out (schedule permitting) to Patient Meetings as guest speakers.

If you would like a PAC Chairperson to be the guest speaker at your next meeting, contact the Network Community Outreach Coordinator, Anna Bennett at (800) 238-ESRD (3773) ext. 474.

Please contact the Network at least one month before the meeting to allow time to work out schedules.