



# P.F.E. BULLETIN

## PATIENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

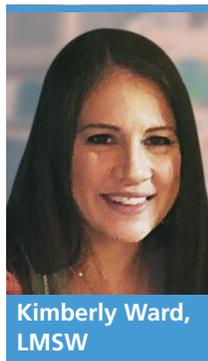
ISSUE 1

Real stories about patient and family engagement provided  
by staff members of New York State dialysis facilities

### An interview with Davita East Islip Dialysis social worker Kimberly Ward, LMSW on the topic of: Forming a support group

#### How did you get started?

As a start, our intern Cassandra (an MSW candidate) conducted a needs assessment with a number of patients and determined that the patients in our facility were interested in attending a monthly support group in which they would address a variety of topics.



Kimberly Ward,  
LMSW

Most of the patients indicated that they would like to meet as a group, outside of treatment time, to discuss relevant issues and share tips/advice related to their experiences adjusting to dialysis. Cassandra and I started the support group with two sessions on Saturdays, which we thought would provide an opportunity for more patients to attend. Cassandra developed a flexible agenda for each support group meeting, and distributed related education resources. Discussions during the first few sessions led us to understand that Saturdays were not the best time for the patients and helped us establish a schedule that best meets the needs of the patients.

#### When does the group meet?

The group now meets at 3:30 on the third Tuesday of each month. Each meeting runs about one hour.

#### What barriers have you encountered, and what have you done to remedy them?

There have definitely been struggles in maintaining the support group and ensuring the availability of supportive education to discuss with patients. Some barriers have included inclement weather, transportation issues with patients, and language accommodations. Each month serves as a learning tool, however for what to build upon or improve for the following months. In regards to weather, if it appears to be inclement, we delay the start of the group meeting for about 5-10 minutes to accommodate late arrivals. On the day of each meeting, we also call patients who expressed interest in participating to see if they have reliable transportation for group later that day.



#### Attention: Social Workers

Share information on patient engagement activities at your facility. Participate in the New York Social Worker group:

<https://jeny.ipro.org/group/28-new-york-social-workers>

For more information about patient engagement, Network-hosted webinars are available for viewing on the Network's website:

<https://network2.esrd.ipro.org/events/>

As for language accommodations, unfortunately we are not bi-lingual, nor do we have an interpreter attending the meetings. Considering this however, we strive to distribute all materials in both English and Spanish, so that options are available to patients. During onev support group, we had a patient attend with his family member to interpret.



### **What have been your successes so far?**

The support group has made serious progress in the eight months since we started. Two patients attended the first meeting, one of whom attended via phone. This past month all of our seats in the meeting room were filled with patients and family members. Each month, we create a theme or focus subject for the meeting, and I believe that has helped with structure of the group and tools/resources patients are able to take from it. The last two months, for example, have been focused on treatment modalities, and we've had a former patient who is transplant recipient come to the group to speak and answer patients' questions. We have focused on themes such as understanding kidney disease, symptoms, healthy living, coping skills, emotions, etc.

### **Do you have advice to other facilities on how to get started facilitating groups?**

I have found the key to maintaining a consistent support group is incorporating relevant tools/resources that patients are interested in or have expressed interest in. The social work intern and I round with patients to assess trending topics that they are struggling with or need additional support with. In addition, we try to also include opportunities for local support within the community. During the month of May, some of the members from the support group and DaVita staff walked in the Long Island Kidney Walk organized by the National Kidney Foundation. It was a great opportunity for not only DaVita but also our patients interested in community support.

Ultimately, enthusiasm for the support group and consistent scheduling is crucial in maintaining a group. We believe patients value the availability of the group each month. While some are unable to attend each meeting, there are some patients who try to make it and appear to be receptive to the information discussed and tools we make available.

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