



Department of Health

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TO: Dialysis Centers

Health Advisory: COVID-19 Guidance for Dialysis Treatment

Please distribute immediately to:
Community and Hospital Based Dialysis Centers

COVID-19 has been detected in multiple communities around New York State. The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is issuing the following guidance regarding access to critical dialysis services.

On March 10, 2020, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in dialysis facilities. This memo is available at <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-19-esrd.pdf>. The purpose of this advisory is to ensure that all State-licensed and federally-certified dialysis centers are following this guidance, and the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/dialysis.html>, last updated March 30, 2020, to ensure the health and safety of our vulnerable dialysis patients.

With the widespread prevalence of COVID-19 in the general population, there will be individuals positive for, or suspected to be positive for, COVID-19 who receive End Stage Renal Dialysis (ESRD) services. CMS recommends, and New York State strongly supports, these individuals continuing to receive ESRD services in the community if they do not require hospitalization. Despite the recommendations of CMS and the CDC, there are dialysis centers sending patients to hospitals if they have mild/non-severe respiratory symptoms or have or are suspected to have COVID-19. As the number of cases continues to rise, it is critical that hospitals reserve their resources and staffing to care for the sickest patients. Hospital capacity for ESRD must be reserved for those dialysis-dependent patients who require hospitalization.

The CMS and CDC guidance includes strategies for dialysis providers to continue to safely offer ESRD services in the outpatient setting to those having or suspected of having COVID-19. The guidance includes requirements for personal protective equipment (PPE) and ways to prevent transmission between patients and protect staff. Patients presenting for treatment who are positive, or suspected of being positive for COVID-19, should be provided a surgical or procedure mask and kept separate from other patients.

Additional Recommendations:

- ESRD center can consider cohorting patients who are confirmed to have COVID-19, and the dialysis staff caring for them, together in the unit and/or on the same shift (e.g. the last shift of the day).
- Patients who are only suspected to have COVID-19 should be cohorted separately from confirmed cases and the general population.
- An isolation room can be used if the ESRD center does not currently have a hepatitis B positive patient on their census.
- Centers approved to provide Home Hemodialysis Training and Support should make every effort to transition patients with confirmed COVID-19, who are willing and able to receive dialysis at home, to do so.

NYSDOH issued an advisory on March 22, 2020, providing information for nursing homes wishing to apply for emergency approval to provide dialysis on-site, through an arrangement with an ESRD provider. That guidance may be found through the Health Commerce System: https://commerce.health.state.ny.us/hpn/ctrldocs/alrtview/postings/DOH_SkilledNursingFacilitiesHomeHemodialysis_032120_1584882887628_0.pdf.

Additional guidance, patient support, and resources can be obtained from the End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Network of New York. The ESRD Network is supported by CMS, with a mission to provide assistance to individuals receiving dialysis and educational information to dialysis providers. The ESRD Network has information on COVID-19 on their website available at <https://network2.esrd.ipro.org/provider/patient-services/emergency-info/covid-19-resources/>.

Questions or concerns about ESRD services for patients having or suspected of having COVID-19 can be directed to covidhospitaldtc@health.ny.gov.

Additional Information:

New York State Department of Health's COVID-19 Webpage
<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's COVID-19 Webpage
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>