



KIDNEYS R US

FROM THE
QIRN3 PATIENT ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

September 2010

WHAT IS THE HOLD-UP?

By Anna Szonyi, with Teresa Husbands, RN, CC, Renal Ventures Newton

In September 2007 I was told by a Nephrologist, "Begin to prepare for dialysis". My numbers were getting close to that unimaginable time when you need dialysis *now*. The day after Thanksgiving I was in the operating room having an emergency catheter placed in my chest. After an hour in recovery I was on my way to dialysis. *Why did I not have an access placed in sooner?* Having only Medicaid coupled with the fact that there was no vascular surgeon in New Jersey who accepted my insurance, I had one option. I had to go to the University of Medicine and Dentistry in New Jersey located in Newark. (Note: this information had been provided to me through the New Jersey State Medicaid office.)

Christmas was only a few weeks away when I began dialysis at Newton Renal Ventures. Needless to say, I was scared and I didn't know what to expect. That sound of that large metal machine running, watching my blood pull out of me, through the tubing, returning to my body. A simple blood draw takes what, five to ten minutes? This drawing of blood would take over three hours to complete. All right, there I was. I had been waiting for fifteen minutes to get "hooked-up." Finally the nurse (a registered nurse [RN]) was ready to get me started; listening to my lungs, checking for swelling, asking any nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, any pain anywhere? Beep, beep, beep...hey, I was finished with my treatment. Then, the Patient Care Technician (PCT) who had been taking care of me for the last three and half- hours cannot disconnect my catheter from the machine. Why? According to the New Jersey State Department of Health and Senior Services who are responsible for the regulations dialysis units must comply with, only an RN

can connect or disconnect a catheter. Only an RN flushes (or pushes) saline and heparin through your catheter lines. If another patient is in distress or has a catheter you may need to wait to get on or get off treatment until an RN is available. *It is a New Jersey State regulation that only an RN can provide these nursing skills while your access is a catheter.*

As you are reading your newsletter, you may be thinking to yourself; I have a fistula (or graft) what is the hold-up? I got here around 9:30 a.m.; it is now 10:10. Why am I not on? Many of us have experienced those horrid cramps, or that diving feeling when your blood pressure begins to drop, or maybe you have begun to sweat, are getting clammy, and you have that falling sensation from a low blood sugar. All of these things can, and usually do, require triage (a team priority response) to help you recover. And today, the person on before you is struggling to the point that their treatment is delayed and so now you are too. Now the medical team gets to that person, whom you know, bringing them to a safer place to finish their treatment or to be transported to the local emergency room. But things balance out. There are days when we get on early and then there are days when we get on late...the important thing is that we all get our full treatment.

As ESRD patients we have learned the fullest meaning of those old adages: patience is a virtue and treat others as you wish to be treated. At my unit's waiting room we have access to the computer (the Internet), a flat-screen television and the room is set-up conducive to conversation, putting a puzzle together, or playing chess/checkers. It is during those times

of waiting that I learned the most about living with dialysis through talking with friends who understand and care because they live it too. Take advantage of those delays; say a little prayer for the person you follow if they are running behind as well as

the staff who are providing them care. Call a friend, read the newspaper or a book. Fifteen to thirty minutes of doing something positive, constructive, creative will help your well-being while the option of fretting will not.

SHOULD I GET THE FLU SHOT ?

September has arrived with promise of cooler weather and beautiful foliage. Along with these wonderful changes after a long, dry summer comes the possibility of contracting influenza. Each year the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends vaccinations for certain groups of individuals. On February 24, 2010 vaccine experts voted that everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine each year starting with the 2010-2011 influenza season. CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted for "universal" flu vaccination in the U.S. to expand protection against the flu to more people.

While everyone should get a flu vaccine each flu season, it's especially important that the following groups get vaccinated either because they are at high risk of having serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for people at high risk for developing flu-related complications:

1. Pregnant women
2. Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
3. People 50 years of age and older
4. People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
5. People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
6. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
 - Healthcare workers
 - Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu

- Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)

Talk with a doctor before getting a flu shot if you:

- Have ever had a severe allergic reaction to eggs or to a previous flu shot **or**
- People with a history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome that occurred after receiving influenza vaccine

If you are sick with a fever when you go to get your flu shot, you should talk to your doctor or nurse about getting your shot at a later date. However, you can get a flu shot at the same time you have a respiratory illness without fever or if you have another mild illness.

Please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/flushot.htm#whatis> for further information.

2010 KIDNEY SCHOOL™

The FREE, online Kidney School (www.kidneyschool.org) has a fresh new look and updated content. There are 16 modules that you can visit any time you like, 24 hours a day. Topics include treatment options, diet, anemia, heart health, lab tests, sexuality, long-term complications, and much more. Kidney School can help you take charge of your kidney health!

JOIN THE PAC TODAY!

The Patient Advisory Committee (PAC) consists of patients from dialysis facilities in our ESRD Network # 3. The committee develops the patient newsletter and promotes educational materials for ESRD patients. The PAC members have a genuine concern for the quality of care issues and encourages patients to be involved in their healthcare, share skills and experience, and attend meetings. Call toll free 1-888-877-8400 and join the PAC!

How to Contact QIRN3
 Cranbury Gates Office Park
 109 South Main Street, Suite 21
 Cranbury, NJ 08512
 Phone: 888-877-8400 (toll-free)
 Fax: 609-490-0835
 Email: qirn3@nw3.esrd.net

We're on the
 Web!
www.qirn3.org