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Annual quality reports show we're on a path of excellence

Our patients deserve the best possible care. That's why we make quality a top priority and measure it in multiple ways: a nationwide 5-star system, twice-a-year patient experience surveys, and federal Dialysis Facility Reports. Here we summarize our quality as rated for 2017.

Superlative star ratings ★★★★★

Based on 2017 performance in eight key quality areas, we earned an average of 4.46 on a 5-star scale. Eight clinics received 4 stars and seven clinics received 5 stars. Thus all of our clinics are rated "above average" or "much above average."

High patient satisfaction

An outside firm surveys patients twice a year about their perceptions of how we're doing, using the In-Center Hemodialysis Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (ICH-CAHPS). The federal government rated our clinics for patient survey results in 2017. Every clinic rated received 4 or 5 stars for overall patient experience of care.

Federal reports show we are consistently leading the nation

Our performance continues to be better than the U.S. average: better first-year-on-dialysis survival, higher transplantation rates, fewer hospitalizations, better vascular access, and higher flu immunization rates among our patients.

New patients do much better

Our three-year mortality rate for first-year dialysis patients, who are often very vulnerable, is 13% better than the national average. We want individuals to do well during their adjustment period. Nationally, new patients have worse survival than longer-term patients, however, our new patients have **better** survival; this could be due to preparation before starting dialysis and our intense care focus during the critical first year on dialysis. Our first-year patient mortality has dropped steadily over the past three years, a great trend to observe.

Many more transplants

We celebrated 93 kidney transplants in our patients, the most in any year so far. Our kidney transplant rate is 60 percent higher than the national average. Kidney transplant is the best treatment option for eligible individuals, with better outcomes than dialysis. We help guide patients through the process to qualify, and we celebrate when one of them gets a transplant. However, transplant is an underutilized therapy. Twenty-four percent of our patients are waiting for a transplant. Four percent of U.S. dialysis patients got a transplant last year; at Northwest Kidney Centers it was seven percent.

Fewer hospitalizations

In 2017, our patients had 10 percent fewer hospital admissions than the national average. We strive to avoid unnecessary hospitalizations by helping people with kidney disease live well. In addition, we save enormous costs by reducing avoidable hospitalizations. Hospital care is the most expensive element of health care costs.

Effective, safe blood access

The gold standard for hemodialysis blood access is a fistula. The alternative is a hemodialysis catheter, which carries an increased chance of infection. We strive to limit catheter use. In 2017, 7.5 percent of our patients had a long-term catheter, compared to 11 percent nationwide.

Protection from the flu

A total of 78 percent of our patients were vaccinated for influenza by Dec. 31, 2017. Across the country, the total was 72 percent.

Good preparation for dialysis

Once diagnosed with serious kidney problems by their primary care provider, people should see a nephrologist, a kidney expert, as soon as possible. Early nephrology care helps people learn better ways to manage the disease, slow its progress and prepare for a new life with dialysis if they need it. In 2017, 83 percent of our new patients had been under a nephrologist's care before they started dialysis. This compares to 66 percent nationally. Early kidney care before dialysis has improved among the population we serve since the advent of the Affordable Care Act and expanded Medicaid in the state of Washington.

Knowledge is power when facing kidney failure

That's why we invest in chronic kidney disease outreach, offering free classes to people with kidney disease and their family members. We talk about treatment choices, preparing for dialysis, home dialysis options, nutrition and transplant. In 2017, 420 individuals with serious kidney problems attended our pre-dialysis class Choices (or individual sessions.) We aim for everyone to have this preparation before starting dialysis. Last year 45 percent of all new patients starting dialysis at Northwest Kidney Centers received Choices education.

Striving to do better

There's always room to do things better and we aim for continuous improvement. We are working to lower dialysis-related infections and better coordinate care after a hospital experience.