



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Fact Sheet

Office of Public Affairs
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April 2015

Kidney Disease and Dialysis Services

The mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Kidney Program is to improve the quality, coordination, and consistency of patient centered healthcare delivered to Veterans at risk for or suffering from kidney disease.

The scope of the Kidney Program includes the evaluation of Veterans with incipient kidney disease to the management of Veterans with acute or permanent kidney failure. Services may include renal biopsy for assessment and management of intrinsic kidney disorders, as well as evaluation of inherited kidney disease, blood pressure and metabolic disturbances (including kidney stones), anemia and bone disorder management, dialysis therapy, and kidney transplantation.

Key Facts:

- VA was the first national healthcare system in the US to offer a maintenance dialysis program
- VA/DoD jointly published the first US clinical practice guidelines (CPG) concerning the management of patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD) in primary care in 2001
- VA has traditionally offered life-long immunosuppressant medication coverage for Veterans who have received a kidney transplant
- Major causes of CKD are diabetes mellitus and hypertension
- Chronic kidney disease is one of the top 10 causes of death; death is most frequently due to cardiovascular disease
- Veteran population with decreased kidney function^{1,2} (CY'11)
 - The prevalence rate of VA enrollees with mild to moderately and moderate to severely decreased Glomerular Filtration Rate (GFR) is 10.29 percent
 - The prevalence rate of VA enrollees with severely decreased GFR is 0.68 percent
 - The prevalence rate of VA enrollees with kidney failure is 0.52 percent
- VA Kidney Services Available (FY'14)
 - All Veterans enrolled in VA are eligible for services, regardless of service connection status
 - Enrolled Veterans can receive services from the VA or from community providers under the Non-VA Care Program if VA services are unavailable
 - 149 VA health care facilities offer kidney disease specialty care (“nephrology” services)

¹ Kidney function as assessed by GFR: Stage G3a mild to moderately decreased GFR = 45-59 cc/min/1.73 m²; Stage G3b moderately to severe decreased GFR = 30-44 cc/min /1.73m²; Stage G4 severely decreased GFR = 15-29 cc/min/1.73m²; Stage G5 kidney failure = GFR < 15 cc/min/1.73m or dialysis.

² Kidney Disease: Improving Global Outcomes CKD Work Group. KDIGO clinical practice guideline for the evaluation and management of chronic kidney disease. *Kidney inter., Suppl.* 01//print 2013;3(1):1-150.

- 96 VA facilities offer inpatient and/or outpatient dialysis; 25 centers are inpatient-only
- Of the 71 VA outpatient dialysis centers, 64 are hospital based units, 2 are joint VA/DoD units, 4 are freestanding units, and one is within a community based outpatient clinic (CBOC)
- VA enrollees must be offered the option of home dialysis provided either directly by the VA or through the Non-VA Care Program
- 36 outpatient hemodialysis centers offer home dialysis care directly
- 5 VA medical centers host kidney transplantation programs
- VA Delivered Kidney Care (Calendar Year 2013)
 - 13,794 Unique Veterans receiving dialysis paid for by VA; representing an annual increase of 13% since 2008
 - 794 Veterans received home dialysis; 55percent (434) by VA facilities and 45percent (360) under the Non-VA Care Program
 - Increasing use of telehealth services to increase Veteran access to kidney specialty care
 - Secure messaging: 7,319 messages
 - Clinical video telehealth: 4,977 encounters
- VA Kidney Research (FY'14)
 - The research budget for the study of kidney disease has been \$18.5 million per year for the past 5 years (FY'10-FY'14)
 - The VA Cooperative Studies Program has supported national clinical trials addressing the best treatment of Veterans with CKD since at least 1998

Publicly available resources related to Veteran kidney disease and services:

- **VA Kidney Program Webpage:** <http://www.va.gov/health/services/renal/>
- **VA e-Kidney Clinic:** <http://ckd.vacloud.us/>
- **VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for Management of CKD in Primary Care:** <http://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/CD/ckd/>
- **CDC website:** <http://www.cdc.gov/>
- **VA Transplant web site:** <http://www.va.gov/health/services/transplant/>
- **United States Renal Data System Special Study on Transition of Care in CKD:** http://www.usrds.org/2014/view/v2_12.aspx

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