

## President's Message

# Working With and Not 'Around' Nephrology Nurses

David Walz, MBA, BSN, RN, CNN, FACHE



Since the release of the Advancing American Kidney Health Initiative on July 10, 2019, by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ANNA has supported the efforts to increase home dialysis care and services (Federal Register, 2019). Since that time and for many years prior, ANNA has emphasized the important role nephrology nurses play in providing home dialysis care and educa-

tion for long-term therapy success and patient safety. ANNA has voiced the necessity of standardized training and education processes to achieve the desired outcomes for the anticipated increase in the number of patients moving to home dialysis and emphasized this work must be led by nephrology nurses. The following excerpt was shared in a letter ANNA wrote to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in September 2019. These words are as relevant today as when submitted to CMS nearly three years ago.

Home dialysis care makes it imperative that nephrology nurses and other health providers anticipate and prepare for any complications that may occur to both smooth the course toward patient independence in-home dialysis therapy and to prevent therapy failure. There must be an investment in educating nephrology nurses, so they have the proper skill set to train patients and their caregivers for home therapy, as well as prepare additional nurses to be proficient and competent in-home dialysis training and therapy management. In addition, nephrology nurse practitioners will require additional training and education to transition in-center patients to home therapies, provide adequate dialysis prescriptions, and troubleshoot complications.

ANNA has been active in efforts to educate nurses about home dialysis therapies to make this therapy more accessible to patients. Such efforts have included enhanced education offerings at our national conferences, articles in this journal, and webinars.

### Work With Nurses, Not Around Them

Yet it cannot be ignored that the pandemic has led nurses to leave their jobs and even the profession, and nephrology nursing has not been spared this exodus. As an approach to this nursing shortage, there has been a movement to work around nurses instead of working with nurses. This approach looks to remove nurses from their unique roles and replace

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them with other health care and non-health care providers. Such an approach is being discussed regarding home dialysis therapies. My response, which appeared in a recent ANNA press release, is:

We cannot imagine a potentially more compromised approach to ensuring competent, qualified home dialysis care. ANNA works tirelessly in the support of advocating only sound educational programs that are optimized to develop, maintain, and deliver high-quality kidney care. We actively support a cross-disciplinary team approach to patient care and wellness and while we support interdisciplinary collaboration in delivering high-quality, cost-effective kidney care.

Involving the nephrology registered nurse at the beginning of the process leads to the development of a professional nurse-patient relationship that fosters trust, familiarity, and communication. This is an important step in identifying learning needs and managing patient therapy challenges. Early identification of challenges and learning needs is imperative to long-term therapy success and sustainability.

### Best Path Forward

The best path forward is to work in collaboration with nephrology nurses and not 'around' nephrology nurses. It is time to include the expertise of nurses in the roles they know and do best to achieve the highest patient outcomes. ANNA will continue to invest in the efforts to advance home dialysis therapies in the months and years to come, and expects to participate fully as a member of the nephrology community in this effort. ANNA has established a Dialysis Home Therapies Task Force and is conducting a Think Tank to explore and identify the nephrology nurse's role in home therapies in the environment of a nephrology health care worker shortage in the effort to ensure the patient's safe and informed transition to home dialysis. ANNA will continue to be the voice and resource for nephrology nurses and patients in this work.

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ANNA President

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