

House Committee on Ways and Means

Statement of DaVita Patient Citizens

Introduction

As America's largest dialysis patient organization, we are proud to represent over 20,000 pre-dialysis and dialysis patients and their families. On a wide variety of issues, we seek to ensure that the patients' point of view is heard and considered by policy makers so that continued progress may be made in the quality of care and life for patients with kidney disease. We appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony to the House Ways and Means Committee's Hearing on Patient Safety and Quality Issues in End Stage Renal Disease.

Quality of Life

Anemia is a serious, life-threatening problem affecting almost all dialysis patients. It causes fatigue, weakness and increased risk of hospitalization and death. In most cases, the administration of synthetic replacements for the hormone erythropoietin can manage our anemia and restore our energy. With appropriate anemia management, we require less medical attention and hospitalization, and we are better able to lead productive, quality lives.

The Experts on Quality of Care

Every dialysis patient's anemia situation is different. The decision of how to manage our anemia should therefore be made by our physicians in consultation with ourselves. Typical physician prescribing practices allow for physicians to use package inserts as a **guideline** for their prescriptions. Many of us enjoy higher quality lives because our doctors prescribe the appropriate amount of erythropoietin for each of us individually. This allows each of us to participate in the activities of daily living.

Research Applicable to ESRD Patients is Needed

Of course, it is critical that we, as well as our physicians, be informed of any increased risks associated with anemia management. The studies cited in recent news articles focused on Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) patients in stages 1-4, who are not on dialysis. The studies did not focus on patients with End Stage Renal Disease (stage 5) – patients like us, who are on dialysis. We therefore look forward to clinical studies of anemia management in the ESRD population to determine the appropriate approach to anemia management for dialysis patients.

Community Cooperation Improves Quality of Care

Recognizing the importance of appropriate anemia management, we joined with the kidney care community in asking CMS to revise the April 2006 monitoring policy on anemia management to better align with physician prescribing methods and to take into consideration the patient's quality of life. We believe that this revised monitoring policy is a vast improvement over the April 2006 policy.

Conclusion

DaVita Patient Citizens greatly appreciates this opportunity to comment on ESRD patient safety

and quality issues. We ask that, before proposing further changes to the CMS monitoring policy on anemia management, you take into consideration all of the data and the population to which it applies, as well as, the patients' perspective.