

Skilled Nursing News



On-site dialysis remains relatively rare in nursing homes, with most facilities still relying on off-site providers. But where it has been introduced through “dialysis den” partnerships, operators report clear operational and clinical benefits.

The most significant improvement has been continuity of care, with on-site services eliminating communication gaps, delays and logistical issues that come with transporting residents to external centers.

Texas-based Eduro Healthcare has adopted such a partnership for one of their properties through a contract with Rendezor Dialysis, said Deanna Truax, Texas area president for Eduro. The operator’s staff can quickly coordinate care, access information and respond to patient needs, leading to better overall outcomes and a higher quality of care, Truax said of the service.

“Our residents leave dialysis and are able to continue the rest of their day, not leave the building exhausted, come back exhausted from the travel alone,” said Truax. They’re able to eat breakfast, do dialysis, have lunch, participate in activities, have conversations along the way – instead of coming back after five hours and their whole day is gone, she said.

Only one of Eduro’s roughly 40 facilities offers on-site dialysis, but there’s growing interest in expanding it, Truax said. What’s happening at Eduro reflects a larger trend of openness toward dialysis dens, along with other ways to make such services work more seamlessly in a resident’s day-to-day life.

Major considerations to expanding dialysis dens across facilities include whether there is sufficient patient need and whether the facility can justify the upfront investment.

Infrastructure considerations include sufficient space and electrical capacity. Moreover, compliance measures have to be kept in mind and the effort has to be ultimately manageable for most facilities rather than prohibitive, Truax said.

Incentives in policy and value-based care

Dialysis “dens” are also linked to reduced hospitalizations and improved patient outcomes, making such a service a boon for value-based care models, added Ben Williams, VP of business development for Rendeavor.

The service also helps strengthen hospital relationships, Truax said. Nursing homes can accept patients from the hospital quickly since they don’t have to coordinate external dialysis appointments.

“Our referral partners and our hospital systems have a hard time if somebody is new to dialysis,” said Truax. “We’re working with Rendeavor on chair times and authorizations and we’re able to come back to the hospital and say yes, we can do it ... we’re really saving them a step,” said Truax. “That’s less of a worry for the hospital.”

Residents receiving dialysis on site are more likely to participate in physical and occupational therapy since they’re not losing hours each day for travel and treatment elsewhere.

Dialysis dens create cost savings and efficiencies across the care continuum – if leadership deems it’s needed in the market they serve, of course – while also helping facilities address systemic challenges linked to highly complex, comorbid patients.

As for policy linked to on-site services in the nursing home, states like Illinois have added an add-on payment for dialysis in the facility, particularly for Medicaid patients. This extra funding helps cover the cost of caregivers typically not covered by Medicare.

Such programs are more financially viable and less risky for facilities, Williams said, and the policy is considered “game-changing.” But there’s still uncertainty around how payments are implemented across payers.

Truax believes that such policies encourage wider adoption, especially considering the growing openness toward on-site dialysis is already there, she said.

There’s hope that Illinois’ approach will serve as a model for other states.

A major time saver

Providing dialysis within the facility reduces the risks associated with transportation to outpatient centers, especially for residents with complex health conditions, Truax and Williams said.

Off-site dialysis often involves early mornings, long travel times and extended treatment sessions which can leave patients exhausted, disoriented or agitated, Truax said.

Eduro residents are less likely to miss treatments due to transportation or scheduling issues with off-site dialysis, and they benefit from predictable routines, familiar staff and better coordination of medications and meals.

“I’ve woken up in my home, and I’m still in my home, and now I’m just going to another aspect of my home for my continued service. They know my nurses by name, and they called my CNA to come help me,” Truax said of residents’ experience. “The whole process is much more peaceful and less jarring, especially when you’re just coming out of the hospital. And sometimes dialysis is new too.”

Consistency translates to better overall health and helps prevent complications tied to missed or disrupted treatments, Truax said.

Eliminating long transportation times helps more patients to participate in rehabilitation therapies – patients regain hours in their day, which can be used for physical and occupational therapy, if needed.

“Patients miss rehab when they’re going out to dialysis every other day. They get stuck in traffic in Chicago for three hours, plus a four-and-a-half-hour treatment, plus waiting. I don’t want to do that any day once a week, forget about three times a week,” said Williams. “All of these things add up to patients recovering much faster, therefore they can do much more, therefore they can get home much sooner.”

Better compliance, faster recovery and earlier discharge back home is linked to on-site services, including dialysis. Staff and therapy teams value service integration, noting that it enhances patient experiences and clinical outcomes, Williams said of Remdevor’s clients.

On-site options and admin burdens

On the staffing side, on-site services lower logistical burdens and enable faster discharge since they don’t need to wait days or weeks for placement in an outpatient diagnosis center. And hospitals benefit too, with facility dialysis reducing readmissions and alleviating capacity issues; patients are discharged more efficiently.

“Patients are experiencing a better quality of life to the extent that they are really able to do more of their therapies, their physical therapy, because they are not having to spend time being transported to a facility, they’re gaining easily two hours of a day,” said Karen Reiner, VP of marketing for Rendevor.

Dens are more of a win on the post-acute care side, he said, but hospital systems are also considering such an option, with case managers and discharge planners being educated on dens.