

Safer Practice Notice

Date: November 2022

Topic: Protecting Central Line/Fistula Access in Hemodialysis Patients – A Shared Responsibility

Situation:

- There have been two (2) recent incidents where an IV line was inserted in the same arm as a fistula.
- No harm occurred in the first incident and the second incident was appropriate during a life-threatening situation.
- Both incidents were reviewed by the Provincial Renal Program leadership team for quality improvement opportunities.

Background:

- All hemodialysis patients have an access site which is the route to the patient's circulatory system to connect to a dialysis machine to complete their dialysis treatments.
- The patient's access site can be via a central line in the neck or femoral vein; or via an arteriovenous fistula in the patient's arm.
- Sites are commonly referred to as CVC (central venous catheter) or fistula. Whether the patient has a CVC or fistula, this is the only access used to complete dialysis and it is the patient's lifeline.
- **Only certified hemodialysis staff are permitted to use a CVC or fistula access sites due the increased risk of severe bleeding, aneurysm, infection, clots and air embolism.**
- **No blood pressures, IVs or venipunctures should be performed in the same arm as a dialysis fistula.**

Assessment:

- All patients are educated on the care of their access site and are encouraged to advocate for their safety against the non-dialysis use of access sites.
- Patients carry a wallet card that explains what type of access they have and procedures to follow in the event of an emergency.
- This Safer Practice Notice is to increase awareness of the purpose and dangers associated with using a hemodialysis patient's access site for other purposes by health care professionals.

Recommendations:

- **Dialysis access sites are solely for the purpose of dialysis treatment. Using the access for any other purpose puts the patient's well-being and safety at risk.**
- Ask patients for their wallet card and review the instructions. Make note of the presence and location of a patient's access site as appropriate in your documentation.
- **All staff should be reminded that there is to be no blood pressures, IVs or venipunctures performed in the same arm as a dialysis fistula.**
- The Provincial Renal Clinic and Hemodialysis sites will continue to educate patients about care of their access site and to ensure all patients have up to date wallet cards.
- Access sites may be used in a code or life-threatening situation.

Safer Practice Notices are issued by the Health PEI Quality, Risk and Patient Safety Division to communicate recommended changes as a result of events that have been reported and investigated through the Provincial Safety Management System (PSMS).

For more information on this Safer Practice Notice, please contact:
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