

ALTH TODAY

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Dealing with dialysis

There are currently 400,000 individuals in the U.S. who are in end stage renal disease (ESR



Kellie Akahara, R.N., facility administrator for Hernando Kidney Center and patient Dennis Garvin. Garvin lost both kidneys to cancer. He's waiting for a transplant. In the meantime is continuing to work part-time in a job that requires traveling. He had played 18 holes of golf before his late afternoon appointment for dialysis.



This is a view of the dialysis room at Hernando Kidney Center. This picture was taken at a time when no patients were within range, in order to maintain confidentiality. Next to the machine is the dialyzer which pumps the patient's blood through the tube and is cleansed.

Photos by LOIS HANNA



Stephen Dunn, a care tech, shows a plastic cylinder which an ESRD patient what his/her kidneys would have done, been working. Three times a week, the patient's blood is to the dialyzer and treated. Then it returns to the body, and free of the contaminants that could otherwise bring

**Life is what
you make it**

Dennis Garvin doesn't fit the stereotype of a dialysis patient. He resists any effort to typecast him. He tells of a difficult adjustment to the bout with cancer that left him short a colon and a pair of kidneys. Now it's "a day at a time." He looks and feels optimistic.

He dropped by for an interview between a round of golf and his thrice-weekly dialysis. He says it will take another year at least for a kidney to become available to him, but is determined to take things as they come, enjoying life as it is.

He says that his adjustment to the dialysis routine was not an easy one. "There were times when I left this place in tears."

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urgent health issue are referred to committees in both houses, according to a Kidney Care Partners report. There are efforts to increase in-home dialysis.

There has been no annual cost evaluation of ESRD services, as others have undergone. A kidney care and dialysis administrator is quoted as saying, "It takes an act of Congress to give us an increase every year."

A history of dialysis

Dialysis has been around since the 1960s, according to LeAnne Zumwalt of Davita.com, a national dialysis corporation.

In 1972, a patient was dialyzed in front of Congress, who were treated to an extensive medical and finan-

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Last year alone, Medicare spent over 15 billion dollars on ESRD patients in the US. But no funds were allocated specifically for prevention and education.

The bill was crafted by legislators in close consultation with Kidney Care Partners, a Washington, D.C. partnership of corporations who furnish dialysis services in communities like ours.

It amends the Social Security Act to improve the benefits under the Medicare program for beneficiaries with kidney disease.

The Act is available at www.theo-rator.com/bills109/s635.html.

Some current progress has been recorded. According to a Feb. 8 article in the *New Hampshire Union Leader*, there was a small (1.6 percent) hike in the rate that Medicare pays for dialysis, tucked into the 2006 Deficit Reduction Budget Reconciliation package approved by

here's growing recognition that kidney disease has become a priority issue in health care. A lot of people are saying, "It's about time."

19 was World Kidney Day, entire month is National Month. It provides a frame-revving up interest in tackling problem that is affecting numbers of Americans, as others in the world.

new wave of kidney failure with obesity, which is one of es of diabetes. And diabetes kidneys.

idney Care Quality and Im-ent Act of 2005 is in the mill-izes that the support for nt of End Stage Renal Dis-ents is now inadequate. the current reimbursement nly pays for the treatment

Cell phone safety: What's the real truth?

re number of mobile phone users worldwide climbing steadily, any lication that our tiny phones could hurt us is terrifying. However, ntists can't even agree on whether radiation from mobile phones ages our bodies. When will we know just how safe they really are?

COLINE WILLIAMS
IENTIST MAGAZINE

l with a Larry King 1993. King's guest, r David Reynard, ng several phone because his wife, a cell phone, died of or. While the case ally dismissed due ientific evidence, followed.

he number of ow-ners had skyrocket-ited Kingdom's Na-tion Protection eing inundated out the safety of the phone masts. Ru-rowaves frying the

brain, and children who lived near phone masts getting cancer all added fuel to the frenzy.

If any of these rumors were to prove true, the implications would be truly terrifying: in 2006, the number of mobile phone users worldwide is expected to top 2 billion. But the jury is still divided over the issue of mobile phone safety. In January, British researchers published their part of the Interphone study, an international project involving 13 countries, which since 1998 has been investigating trends in mobile phone use in people with brain tumors. It suggested that regular mobile phone users were at

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Urban myths and phone truths

1. Radio waves, microwaves, electromagnetic radiation, RF radiation. What's the difference and can they all fry the brain?

Media scare stories often hopelessly jumble these terms. They're actually all the same thing. Microwaves are simply electromagnetic radio-frequency (RF) waves with frequencies in the microwave band, which stretches from about 800 mega-

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HEALTHY HAPPENINGS

Hearing survey participants need

SPRING HILL — Gardner Audiology has been a ed a \$50,000 grant by Omni Hearing Systems to form a study in Citrus and Hernando counties.

The study will involve a two-part survey. The part will evaluate the impact of mild to moder hearing loss on the life of new hearing aid can

The second part will evaluate their percepti Omni's new hearing aid models as solutions to hearing problems. Upon completion of the sui process, Omni Hearing Systems will analyze at quantify the results.

As part of its agreement with Omni Hearing tems Dan Gardner, Inc., will perform audiolog uations and counseling for participants. The a logic evaluations are valued at \$175 per partici and will be offered at no charge to participants study.

Gardner Audiology is the only recipient of th grant study.

For more information on this survey, call 66 in Spring Hill or (352) 795-5700 in Crystal Rive.

Brooksville Cardiology to celebrate anniversary today

BROOKSVILLE — Brooksville Cardiology will c brate their first anniversary from 3 to 7 p.m. Th day, March 16 with a LifeSouth blood drive at Cortez Blvd.

"We are pleased that Brooksville Cardiology chosen to include us and a blood drive in the anniversary celebration," said LifeSouth District tor Ed Downey.

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DIALYSIS

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cial review of the procedure. Congress was compelled to fund it.

Now there are about 400,000 individuals in the U.S. who are in end stage renal disease (ESRD). Hypertension and diabetes play a large role in ESRD.

"Obesity leads to these other issues, so obesity is a place to start in prevention," says Zumwalt, who works in Washington, D.C. as a member of Kidney Care Partners.

This organization is especially active in education. Currently, Zumwalt says, their platform consists of creating an educational program to work with those at risk before their kidneys fail, and get them access to physician care. The program must be sustainable.

"Many patients are not diagnosed early enough," Zumwalt explains. "Kidney disease is silent — no pain. They don't know that this is happening. If your appendix were rupturing, you'd do something about it. That's not the case with kidney failure.

"It's partially a disease of poverty. Fourty percent of these patients are dual eligible, that is, for Medicare and Medicaid." Visit www.usrds.org for statistics.

Zumwalt says that DaVita, her organization, and other large dialysis providers, as well as small companies, "work very closely and collaborate pretty well together. Relatively speaking, though, it's a small group."

That's the big picture. "Meanwhile, back at the ranch"

Stephen Dunn is comfortable in his role as patient care tech in the Hernando Kidney Care dialysis room. He has short but thick white hair. His easy smile indicates that he's up to anything demanded of him. His patients mean a lot to him.

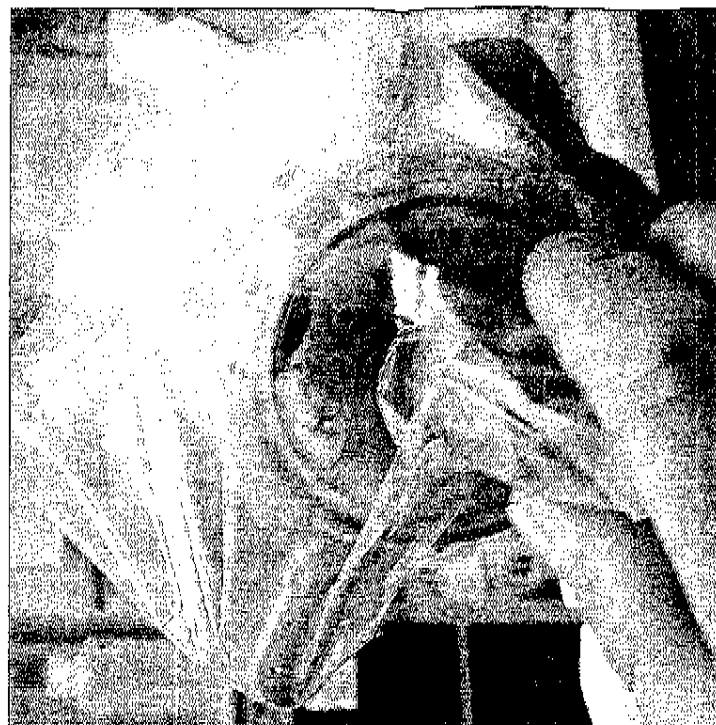


Photo by LOIS HANNA

Stephen Dunn shows a dialyzer which has not yet been cleaned after use. Caught in the filter are contaminants which have been filtered from a patient's blood in the dialysis process.

In the past he's been a bartender and a food server, but he feels he's found his niche. "I got older and wanted to give something better."

Patients come to Dunn's workplace after a hospital procedure in which a "port" has been opened into the body for the three times a week dialysis procedure. The port is available for repeated use.

Late in the day, he tends the rack full of dialyzers or artificial kidneys, each of which is assigned to an individual patient in treatment. Dunn cleans and readies them for the patient's next visit. The dialyzer is a transparent plastic tube which contains a small amount of individually prescribed medication for renewing the blood that passes through it. It's part of the blood's route as it leaves and returns to the patient's body in the (usually) three-hour session.

Dunn says that the condition of the cylinder can indi-

cate whether the patient has stuck by his dietary and lifestyle rules.

At the end of the dialysis session, a certain blood-colored, thick residue may remain in the end of the cylinder. A large amount of this indicates that the patient was "cheating." When it's absent, the time may come when the dialysis sessions can be shortened somewhat.

Visit www.davita.com for information on the effects of kidney disease on the other organs of the body. There are also some good recipes for treats that are safe for a person on dialysis to eat. Also visit www.dialysispatients.org. This is a Web site for patients and their families. Another site is www.kidneycarepartners.com.

It's a good resource for activists who wish to prod their legislators for kidney care advocacy.

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GARVIN

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Then he met a "doctor who turned me around," and he got back into the job that he likes. He works for Dow-Corning, a manufacturer of waterproofing. He's in

Garvin is sure of himself and relates easily to others. He sees humor in his situation, and tells delightful vignettes about his road work. He says he works out every day and still travels.

In fact, he has had a "Dialysis at Sea" which was pre-arranged with a cruise line and he's had a dialysis session in Aruba.

Garvin's been married 24

24 grandkids." The family lived in Indiana, Kentucky and Montana before he and his wife came to Florida.

Maybe this parental task helped to prepare him to take his present health problems with such humor and steadiness.

He doesn't credit himself, though. He looks at Kellie Akahara