

Press Release

Mid-Atlantic Renal Coalition is Awarded Fistula First Breakthrough Initiative Contract

Midlothian, VA, March 25, 2009: The Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services has awarded the Mid-Atlantic Renal Coalition, ESRD Network 5, a contract to direct the national Fistula First Breakthrough Initiative (FFBI). The FFBI began in 2003 as a collaborative among the 18 ESRD Networks and renal community partners to increase the percentage of patients who receive hemodialysis with an arterio-venous fistula (AVF). Fistulas have long been recognized as the “gold standard” for establishing access to a patient’s circulatory system to provide life-sustaining dialysis.

The FFBI’s goals are to continue promoting fistulas for all suitable patients and to achieve a rate of 66% AVFs for prevalent hemodialysis patients. In December 2008, national data showed an AVF prevalence rate of 51.6%, reflecting significant improvement over the 32.4% rate when FFBI started in 2003. “Success in this project can be attributed to the ESRD Networks and the many renal community partners that contributed their time and expertise,” said Lawrence Spergel, MD. Dr. Spergel is a surgeon specializing in dialysis access surgery and management; he has been involved in the FFBI since its inception. “Our current challenge is to better understand and address barriers that stand between us and the 66% goal.”

MARC is committed to re-invigorating the FFBI through leadership that facilitates effective communication and stimulates dissemination of data, protocols, practice materials, and educational resources to patients, nephrologists, surgeons and primary care physicians. Dr. Louis Diamond, MARC President, announced, “We look forward to building upon all the past good work that has already been accomplished as we move forward with this phase of the initiative. Developing stronger alliances with the Quality Improvement Organizations, primary care physicians, and vascular surgeons will help us facilitate each Network’s ability to meet its contractual requirement to CMS.”

Interested parties should visit the FFBI website at www.fistulafirst.org.