

Lourdes' IT Innovations

eMEDflash" Drives Better Manage Dialysis Patients

The Lourdes Health System has implemented technology to assist physicians better manage their dialysis patients.

All patients at the Southern New Jersey Dialysis Center at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center recently began receiving small jump drives (also known as USB or flash drives), e-health record devices that contain information such as medications taken, medical diagnoses, hospitalization records, allergies and emergency contacts.

"Patients on dialysis are often very difficult to manage because of their complex medical needs," said **John Capelli, M.D.**, Medical Director of Renal and Transplant Services and Senior Vice President of Medical Affairs at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center. Dr. Capelli developed the technology and software for the device, called "eMEDflash."

"Because of their condition, the average dialysis patient is on a complicated combination of medications in addition to receiving their three-times-a-week hemodialysis treatments," he said. "It is not unusual for a dialysis patient to take another 10 or more different medications at home on a daily basis."

Patients and their caregivers often are unable to accurately report all of these medications and dosages to emergency room staff, their primary care physicians and specialists. The portable medical record contained on the jump drive will save physician offices time by not having to call the dialysis center to verify the patient's diagnoses, medication and hospitalization history, thus aiding in consistency of care.

"We feel that we have tackled a complex problem to ease our patients' already difficult situation," said Dr. Capelli. "This tool will assist physicians manage the dialysis patients and help the patients feel more in control."

Retrieve Key Information Fast

The program works like this: Each patient receives an eMEDflash. Using a special software program, key information is extracted from his or her medical record and loaded onto the drive, including: patient demographics; dialysis prescription; at-home medications (including generic and brand name, dosage and frequency); known medication allergies; recent hospitalizations (dates and diagnosis); primary care physician; and emergency contact information.

Within a few seconds with just a few keystrokes at a computer, the information is loaded onto the device in a plain text format. It can be plugged into the USB port on any computer and easily read — no special hardware or software required.

The jump drive comes with a key ring so it can be easily attached to the patient's keys and/or hand-bag. If lost, the device has instructions to drop into the nearest mail box and it will be mailed back to the Lourdes dialysis center.

"Because complications often arise in these patients and medications are frequently adjusted, we will update each patient's e-health record monthly or as needed," said Dr. Capelli.

The program is offered to all Lourdes dialysis patients free of charge.

"It doesn't cost us a lot to offer this service, and we feel we have an obligation to help these patients better manage their care," Dr. Capelli said. "This is a great example of using current technology to enhance our patient's care. The response from our patients has been overwhelmingly positive and they have been very grateful," he said.



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