

Increasing Depression Treatment Among Dialysis Patients

The HSAG End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Networks worked with dialysis facilities to increase the percentage of patients who were screened and received treatment for depression.


Areas for Improvement

- Patients often feel that depression or mental health concerns should not be talked about and that they should be able to “just deal with it.”
- Patients decline or do not follow up with referrals to mental health providers or others who can help address their depression.
- There is a lack of mental health providers available to provide treatment in some communities.

Network Strategies

- Targeting dialysis facilities that have low rates for depression treatment with technical assistance to address facility and patient-specific barriers.
- Distributing resources that help facility staff use supportive language (i.e., *People Matter*, *Words Matter* campaign) to help patients feel more comfortable with talking about how they feel emotionally (i.e., *Discussing Depression With Your Care Team*).
- Incorporating health equity by providing facilities with the *Looking at Quality Improvement Through a Health Equity Lens Worksheet* and other mental health resources for diverse patient populations.
- Connecting patients with their primary care physician so they can be further assessed for a mental health diagnosis and receive treatment or additional referrals.

Resources



Reducing Depression Stigma in the Dialysis Facility

Language matters! What is said between co-workers, friends, and family can unintentionally reinforce mental health stigma. Not recognizing the unique needs of patients with mental health conditions may lead them to distrust and avoid treatment.¹

This resource offers alternative language suggestions for discussing patients with mental health conditions.

Common Terms	Preferred Terms
Mentally ill	A person with mental illness.
Schizophrenic	A person living with schizophrenia.
Depressed	A person living with depression.
Anxiety/anxious	A person experiencing high stress or anxiety.
Crazy/insane/disturbed	A person living with a mental health challenge or disorder.
Mental institution/asylum	Mental health hospital.

Common Phrases	Alternatives
That patient is crazy!	That patient is living with a mental illness.



Primary Care Physician Depression Referral Form Template

(Replace the logo in the header with your facility's logo or header as needed)

Patient Name: _____
Dialysis Facility Name: _____
Dialysis Facility Phone Number: _____

Dear Dr. _____,

Our shared patient _____, (DOB: _____), screened positive for depression using the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) on (date) _____. The patient's PHQ-9 score is _____. Please refer to the table below for score interpretation.

I'm reaching out to request additional assessment and follow-up at your office. If the patient does not have an appointment already, we would appreciate your office reaching out to the patient for scheduling or any other needs. We have discussed this information and referral with the patient and have educated them on using their Medicare benefits to obtain mental health care. We have included a list of provider codes that can be used if depression is addressed during your visit with the patient on the second page of this letter.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at _____
(email or phone #)

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Dialysis Facility Feedback

“The tools can be used on a continuous basis to assist patients to be more informed about how to manage their mental health.”

“The resources provided were helpful for connecting patients to mental health services outside of the dialysis facility.”

“We were able to refer several patients for outside mental health services after using the tools provided by the Network.”