



Dialysis & Nephrology DIGEST

A monthly report by Benesch on the Dialysis & Nephrology Industry

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Calendar of Events

OCTOBER 1–JANUARY 31, 2024

Peritoneal Dialysis University

For information, please click [here](#).

NOVEMBER 8, 2023

SIR webinar

For information, please click [here](#).

NOVEMBER 11–14, 2023

American Medical Association Interim Meeting House of Delegates

For information, please click [here](#).

DEADLINE: DECEMBER 6, 2023

ASN: KidneyCure Grant Applications Now Open

For information, please click [here](#).

JANUARY 22–25, 2024

ISET Annual Meeting

Miami Beach, FL

For information, please click [here](#).

FEBRUARY 23–25, 2024

ASDIN: 20th Annual Scientific Meeting

New Orleans, LA (Early Bird Registration Cutoff: Jan. 31, 2024)

For information, please click [here](#).

MARCH 23–28, 2024

SIR Annual Meeting

Salt Lake City, Utah

For information, please click [here](#).

APRIL 11, 2024

RPA Nephrology Coding & Billing Workshop

Registration opens in early November.

For information, please click [here](#).

APRIL 11–14, 2024

RPA: 50th Annual Meeting

Baltimore MD

For information, please click [here](#).

APRIL 14–17, 2024

ANNA National Symposium

Orlando, FL

For information, please click [here](#).

APRIL 25–27, 2024

OEIS: 11th Annual National Scientific Meeting

Las Vegas, NV. (More details to be posted on OEIS website soon)

For information, please click [here](#).



Please contact us if you would like to post information regarding your upcoming events or if you'd like to guest author an article for this newsletter.

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November 13, 2023

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Nephrology and Dialysis

OCTOBER 31, 2023

Fresenius hiring Ascension Capital exec to head care delivery

The appointment of [Craig Cordola](#) as CEO of the dialysis company's care delivery segment takes effect Jan. 1. He was at Ascension Capital for the past six years, where he's currently EVP, responsible for strategic investments. Cordola is replacing Bill Vale, who's retiring from Fresenius at the end of the year.

SOURCE: Fresenius Medical Care

OCTOBER 30, 2023

Kidney Care Partners demands Congressional intervention to address 'insufficient reimbursement' in ESRD payment final rule

Kidney Care Partners (KCP), a coalition of dialysis providers, kidney care professional organizations and pharmaceutical companies, was among the groups to [comment](#) on the [final rule](#) for the ESRD Prospective Payment System (ESRD PPS). It contends CMS ignored its concerns and failed to set reimbursement rates sufficient to address staffing issues in kidney care facilities or support innovation in the sector. KCP singled out the non-inclusion of a forecast error adjustment, remarking the current inflationary environment is negatively impacting providers and will worsen access to dialysis. To mitigate some of the shortfalls in the final rule, it says Congress should pass bipartisan legislation [introduced](#) in the House of Representatives in July, which would expand prevention, screening and education resources while addressing workforce challenges through annual payment updates.

Related: [Calendar Year 2024 ESRD PPS final rule \(CMS-1782-F\)](#) — CMS.gov

SOURCE: Kidney Care Partners

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Nephrology and Dialysis (cont'd)

OCTOBER 27, 2023

CMS: ESRD PPS final rule increases payments to facilities by 2.1%

CMS says the base rate under the [End-Stage Renal Disease Prospective Payment System](#) (ESRD PPS) will increase in CY 2024 to \$271.02, reflecting the application of:

- The wage index budget-neutrality adjustment factor (1.000031);
- A transitional pediatric ESRD add-on payment adjustment budget neutrality factor (0.999503); and
- A CY2024 productivity adjusted ESRDB market basket update factor (1.021).

Overall, ESRD facilities should see payments increase by 2.1% next year, with CMS projecting a 2% bump for freestanding ESRD facilities and 3.1% more for those based in hospital. The agency anticipates the adjustments will push payments to \$6.7 billion for 7,900 facilities that furnish renal dialysis services. CMS also updated the payment rate for dialysis patients with acute kidney injury so it equals the ESRD PPS base rate for CY 2024, giving a final payment rate of \$271.02.

Related: [Dialysis Patient Citizens responds to disappointing final CMS rule that will harm patient healthcare](#) — Dialysis Patient Citizens

SOURCE: CMS.gov

OCTOBER 23, 2023

Benesch: CA law granting reproductive loss benefits could move the trend forward

[SB-848](#), which goes into effect on Jan. 1, will provide CA residents who undergo a reproductive loss event up to five days off without pay and prohibits employers from retaliating against workers who use the benefit. Reproductive loss is defined as a failed adoption, failed surrogacy, miscarriage, stillbirth or unsuccessful assisted reproduction. The statute makes no mention of abortion. Leave time is capped at 20 days within a 12-month period in case a state resident has more than one reproductive loss event during that time frame. CA is the second state with such a benefit, joining IL. However, the IL law only covers miscarriages. Benesch Law says with CA on board, the leave provision may be enacted elsewhere. However, it remains to be seen if other jurisdictions will define reproductive loss as broadly as CA does.

SOURCE: Benesch Law

November 13, 2023

Nephrology and Dialysis (cont'd)

OCTOBER 16, 2023

CA law boosting minimum wage for healthcare workers; first raise for dialysis workers next year

Under the [law](#), the minimum wage for healthcare workers across the state will rise gradually to \$25 per hour over the next several years. Healthcare providers opposed the increase, but a last-minute deal with workers opened the door for the bill to pass. Health employees agreed to drop support for a ballot measure requiring additional regulation for dialysis clinics in exchange for the minimum wage increases. The state's 12 largest health organizations, county-run facilities serving large populations and dialysis clinics will be required to boost minimum wages to at least \$23 per hour by June 2024, \$24 per hour by June 2025 and \$25 per hour by June 2026.

SOURCE: Fierce Healthcare

OCTOBER 11, 2023

Success of weight-loss drug causes share drops at dialysis providers; Fresenius, DaVita call for calm

Ozempik, developed by Danish pharma company Novo Nordisk, is showing promise in delaying the progression of kidney diseases in diabetes patients. The [results](#) from the clinical trial caused shares at Fresenius and DaVita to fall by 17%, while those of dialysis product maker Baxter dropped by 12%. There was a muted [response](#) from the two largest dialysis providers in the U.S. Fresenius Medical Care contends weight-loss drugs will have no net effect on the number of kidney dialysis patients in the future. DaVita expects limited impact from the use of the drugs, since they may only benefit some CKD patients. A Morningstar analyst says even though Ozempik and drugs of its type may delay the onset of dialysis for some patients, it may enable them to stay on it for a longer period, resulting in a benefit for providers.

SOURCE: Reuters

Dialysis & Nephrology DIGEST

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Dialysis & Nephrology DIGEST

Nephrology and Dialysis (cont'd)

OCTOBER 23, 2023

DaVita, eight other dialysis providers settle NY double-billing case for \$9.5M

The nine defendants paid \$3,967,083.38 to the U.S. government under the federal False Claims Act and \$5,629,151.20 to the state of NY under its False Claims Act. The dialysis providers were accused of double-billing Medicaid for certain medications between 2000 and 2010. U.S. attorneys in the Eastern District of New York found they wrote prescriptions to retail pharmacies for certain injectable drugs administered during the course of dialysis treatment for ESRD and billed Medicaid. The drugs already were paid for by Medicaid as part of the composite dialysis payments they received. The defendants were:

- DaVita Healthcare Partners;
- Bay Ridge Sunset Park Dialysis Center;
- Midwood Chayim Aruchim Dialysis Associates;
- New York Artificial Kidney Center;
- The Rogosin Institute, for itself and as successor-in-interest to Nephrology Foundation of Brooklyn;
- Terence Cardinal Cooke Health Care Center;
- New York Renal Associates; and
- Dialysis Clinic, Inc.

Related: [Dialysis cos. settle double-billing allegations for \\$9.5M](#)—Law360 (sub. rec.)
[Dialysis providers settle Medicaid double-billing allegations](#)—Bloomberg Law (sub. rec.)

SOURCE: United States Attorney's Office

OCTOBER 18, 2023

DaVita centralizing clinical documentation with kidney-specific system developed by Google Cloud

DaVita's Center Without Walls (CWOW) was launched at the company's over 2,700 dialysis clinics nationwide. The system uses AI and analytics co-developed with Google Cloud to glean insights from the more than 30 million dialysis treatments DaVita provides annually. CWOW is designed for seamless data sharing and increased collaboration between physician partners, hospitals and internal care teams and aligns with DaVita's goal of integrated kidney care.

SOURCE: Google Cloud

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Dialysis & Nephrology DIGEST

Nephrology and Dialysis (cont'd)

OCTOBER 18, 2023

Fresenius predictive analytics model identifying life-threatening dialysis complication lauded

Fresenius developed a system using near real-time IoT data and clinical data to predict intradialytic hypotension (IDH), a type of low blood pressure which occurs in 10% of hemodialysis treatments. The cloud-based technology can predict IDH up to 75 minutes in advance, mitigating what can be a life-threatening condition. The publication CIO [recognized](#) achievements in IT and chose the Fresenius system as one of its honorees. The company states a primary challenge was scaling the real-time data engineering, inferences and real-time monitoring so it could be used at all 4,000 locations worldwide, even during peak loads.

SOURCE: CIO

OCTOBER 16, 2023

Dialyze Direct expanding reach of home dialysis model to Ga. health system

Northeast Georgia Health Ventures, a part of [Northeast Georgia Health System](#) (NGHS), which serves over one million patients in GA through five hospitals and a number of long-term care facilities and outpatient locations, hired [Dialyze Direct](#) to provide its skilled nursing facility (SNF)-based home dialysis service. The Dialyze Direct model will be available to patients under the NGHS umbrella as well as to its wider network of SNFs. Brooklyn-based Dialyze Direct offers onsite dialysis services in more than 170 SNFs across 13 states, with additional expansion into GA and other states underway.

SOURCE: Dialyze Direct

OCTOBER 3, 2023

Panoramic Health names former OptumCare regional president as CEO

[Dr. Tarek Elsayy](#) was a regional president at OptumCare for the past five years and spent 17 years before that in various senior management positions at Reliant Medical Group and Cleveland Clinic. Panoramic says Elsayy managed relations with public programs such as Medicare ACO, MA, Medicaid, as well as private payers. As co-chair of OptumCare's national physician leadership and governing body, he has expertise in recruiting and retaining care providers, considered integral to Panoramic's mission as a physician-integrated, value-based care platform. Former CEO and co-founder of Panoramic, Dr. Rajiv Poduval, was named executive chair of the company.

SOURCE: Panoramic Health

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Nephrology and Dialysis (cont'd)

OCTOBER 3, 2023

Baxter hires long-time Sysco executive as CFO

[Joel Grade](#) spent the last 21 years in senior executive roles at Sysco, rising to be EVP of corporate development. At Baxter, he'll replace Brian Stevens, who was interim CFO since May and will revert to his prior position of SVP, chief accounting officer and comptroller at the medtech company.

SOURCE: Baxter

OCTOBER 16, 2023

NDAC to provide credentialing for acute dialysis nursing provider in TX

The [National Dialysis Accreditation Commission](#) (NDAC) says the agreement is with RPNT Acute Services, which provides nursing staff with expertise in acute hemodialysis care to hospitals in north and central TX. Chicago-based NDAC will be the exclusive provider of credentialing for RPNT's acute dialysis programs. NDAC claims to have developed the first set of hospital-centric acute dialysis standards in the industry, adding its program is gaining momentum across the U.S.

SOURCE: National Dialysis Accreditation Commission

SEPTEMBER 26, 2023

Somatus: Analysis shows CKD patients receiving transitions of care assessment service have fewer hospital readmissions

The Validation Institute [evaluated](#) (sub. rec.) outcomes from [Somatus'](#) Transitions of Care Assessment (TCA) program. The analysis covered over 14,000 TCAs for patients with Stage 3 CKD to confirm its efficacy in decreasing unplanned 30-day rehospitalization rates. The assessment shows TCA participants' likelihood of hospital readmission for post-attribution discharges was 49% lower than for non-participants. This is the second consecutive year the Validation Institute verified Somatus' claims to be accurate and renewed its certification.

SOURCE: Somatus

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Nephrology and Dialysis (cont'd)

OCTOBER 24, 2023

Somatus joins initiative to address health disparities, equity

Somatus is among over 50 healthcare organizations who took the Health Evolution Forum Health Equity Pledge. Members agree to collect race, ethnicity, language and sex data for at least 50% of the organization's patient, member or customer population and evaluate the data for 90% of their major business lines. Pledge members share data which can be used to address health disparities among various groups. Somatus' Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Joe Kimura, says the pledge aligns with the kidney care company's equity strategy of:

- Robust data collection and analysis to drive measurable improvements;
- Innovative care programs to reduce disparities among patients; and
- Promoting and maintaining a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace.

SOURCE: Somatus

OCTOBER 9, 2023

Study suggests patients aren't being told about conservative kidney management options

Conservative kidney management (CKM) refers to care without dialysis or transplant. Researchers from the NYU Grossman School of Medicine looked at data from 2014 to 2020 and found just 7% of patients with kidney disease reported planning for CKM. These patients were older, had comorbidities and were likely to need assistance with transfers. As well, only 18% of patients reported talking with a nephrologist about forgoing dialysis. On the flip side, the study found most providers were willing to discuss CKM, although none of them had a dedicated CKM protocol or clinic in place.

SOURCE: Healio (sub. rec.)

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Nephrology and Dialysis (cont'd)

OCTOBER 17, 2023

When available, one-third of dialysis clinics complete care coordination, transition training: Study

Researchers at Virginia Commonwealth University deployed two training modules in 2022 to dialysis clinics in the U.S. One course covered care coordination and care transitions, while the other had training on identifying mental and behavioral health issues. The study found 2,541 dialysis facilities, representing 32% of all clinics, participated in the care coordination module but just 319 (4%) completed the mental health module and 192 (2%) did both. Evaluations of dialysis workers showed:

- Participants averaged 65% competency before taking the care coordination module, compared with 83% after the module; and
- Workers averaged 68% competency before taking the mental health module, compared with 81% after the module.

The study concluded stakeholder-driven educational approaches have the potential to uplift patient outcomes.

SOURCE: Healio (sub. rec.)

VAC, ASC and Office-Based Labs

OCTOBER 19, 2023

House subcommittee holds hearings on Medicare bill centered on specialty physicians in community-based office settings

The bipartisan legislation, [HR 3674](#), is meant to address an issue in the CMS fee schedule for 2024, which decreases reimbursement rates for services with high supply and equipment costs when performed in a community-based office setting. The bill provides relief for office-based specialists by increasing the non-facility/office-based practice expense relative value units negatively impacted by CMS' clinical labor policy for the next two years. The Outpatient Endovascular and Intervention Society (OEIS) was among the signatories of a [letter](#) to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which held hearings on the bill on Oct. 19, urging Representatives to take action to prevent the fee cuts.

SOURCE: House Committee on Energy and Commerce

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Dialysis & Nephrology DIGEST

VAC, ASC and Office-Based Labs (cont'd)

OCTOBER 15, 2023

Newsweek ranks nation's best ASCs; two L.A.-based facilities score over 90%

Newsweek expanded the list to 550 ASCs, evaluating and recognizing centers in the 25 states with the most facilities based on CMS data. Two ambulatory surgery centers in Greater Los Angeles topped the list:

1. Cedars Sinai's [90210 Surgery Medical Center](#), with a score of 94.12%; and
2. UCLA Health's [Westwood Ambulatory Surgery Center](#), with a score of 90.76%.

Others in the top five include Duke Health's [Davis Ambulatory Surgical Center](#) in Durham, NC, [Coral Gables Surgery Center](#) in Miami and [Gramercy Surgery Center](#) of NYC.

SOURCE: Newsweek

For more information regarding our nephrology, dialysis and office-based lab experience, or if you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please contact:

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