



**Special Thanks to Coalition Members . . . .**

*Abacus Statistical Consultants*

*American Association of Kidney Patients*

*American Nephrology Nurses' Association*

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

*Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services*

*DaVita*

*Dialysis Clinic Inc.*

*Fresenius Medical Care North America*

*Gambro Healthcare*

*Georgia Association of Kidney Patients*

*Health Systems Management*

*Intermountain End-Stage Renal Disease Network (Network 15)*

*National Association of Nephrology Technicians and Technologists*

*North Carolina Division of Facility Services*

*Oklahoma Foundation for Medical Quality*

*Renal Care Group*

*Renal Network of the Upper Midwest (Network 11)*

*Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University*

*South Carolina Dept of Health and Environmental Control*

*Southeastern Kidney Council (Network 6)*

*The Carolinas Center for Medical Excellence*

**The Medical Review Board of Network #15 endorses the Safe and Timely Immunization Coalition (aka STIC).** Coordinated by Network #6, the STIC project began as a CMS special project in 2005. One of many CMS immunization initiatives, this particular coalition has over 37 project partners involved in helping to improve vaccination rates for dialysis patients and staff. Participants include **dialysis facilities** and representatives from **Networks 15, 11 and 6**, the CDC, the AAKP, ANNA, **dialysis corporations**, state survey agencies, QIOs, Emory University and many additional enthusiastic partners.

This project aims to improve Hepatitis B, Influenza and Pneumococcal vaccination rates for dialysis patients and staff. The goal is to **achieve a 90% vaccination rate for all three by 2007.**

As you know, preventable diseases like influenza, Pneumococcal pneumonia and hepatitis B can have a serious impact on the health status of patients with chronic kidney disease, as well as the elderly or people with disabilities. Immunizations are an easy way to prevent these diseases and their complications in our patient population.

**Barriers to immunization** identified by the Medical Review Board of Network #15 include:

- Lack of a systematic approach to offering, providing and tracking patient vaccinations;
- Communication failure between dialysis facility and point of vaccination i.e., immunization records are not shared among providers, nor are they updated when patients have been seen in the hospital or physicians' offices;
- Facilities aren't aware that Medicare reimburses for immunizations;
- Lack of availability of vaccines (real or perceived);
- Some patients do not realize the benefits of immunizations and refuse vaccinations;
- Knowledge deficit among patients and staff (may be a language barrier in some instances).

**Recommendations from your MRB:**

- Administer the Influenza vaccination annually
- Administer the Hepatitis B series to all patients within the 1<sup>st</sup> year of beginning dialysis
- Administer the Pneumococcal vaccine prior to or within 24 months of the start of dialysis

We thank you in advance for your participation in this very important project!

CMS has placed information about immunizations and communicable diseases on their website. To access these materials go to: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/AdultImmunizations/>.

The Adult Immunization section provides information and resources related to the coverage, billing, delivery, and promotion of influenza, pneumococcal, and hepatitis B vaccinations. Medicare covers both the costs of these vaccines and their administration by recognized providers. The page also provides general facts about adult immunization and links to other resources.

The above web-site also contains a link to information about Medicare's *Influenza Treatment Demonstration Project* that helps pay for antiviral medicines (for people with Medicare who get the flu).

## General Facts and billing information from the CMS Web Site:

- **Influenza**, also called the "flu," is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. There are over 200,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths due to influenza and its complications each year. –Most deaths are people 65 years of age and over. The best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated every year during the fall season. Because flu viruses change from year to year, it is important to get an annual influenza vaccination. Medicare pays for the influenza vaccine commonly known as the "flu shot."

**Medicare Coverage for Influenza Vaccination:** Medicare began covering annual influenza immunizations in 1993 for all Medicare beneficiaries. Medicare covers both the costs of the vaccine and its administration by recognized providers. There is no coinsurance or co-payment applied to this benefit, and a beneficiary does not have to meet his or her deductible to receive this benefit.

- **Pneumococcal pneumonia** is the most common type of bacterial pneumonia. There are over 40,000 cases of invasive pneumococcal disease in the U.S. and approximately one-third of these cases occur in people 65 and older. Over half of the 5,000 annual deaths from invasive pneumococcal disease occur in persons 65 years of age and older. Medicare covers one pneumococcal vaccination for all Medicare beneficiaries. One vaccine at age 65 generally provides coverage for a lifetime, but for some high-risk persons, a booster vaccine is needed. Medicare will also cover a booster vaccine for high-risk persons if 5 years have passed since their last vaccination.

**Medicare Coverage for Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccinations:** Medicare began covering pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccinations in 1981. As stated above, Medicare provides coverage for one (1) pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine for all beneficiaries and will also cover a booster vaccine for high-risk persons, if 5 years have passed since the last vaccination. Medicare covers both the costs of the vaccine and its administration by recognized providers. There is no coinsurance or co-payment applied to this benefit, and a beneficiary does not have to meet his or her deductible to receive this benefit.

- **Hepatitis B** virus can cause serious liver disease, including cirrhosis, liver cancer, liver failure, and death. The virus is found in the blood and body fluids of infected people and can be spread through sexual contact or the sharing of needles. The hepatitis B vaccination can protect high risk persons, such as people with renal disease or hemophilia, from contracting the disease. The vaccine is delivered in a series of 3 or 4 shots. Medicare pays for hepatitis B vaccination for people considered to be at high risk for the disease, this includes patients with CKD.

**Medicare Coverage for Hepatitis B Vaccinations:** Medicare began covering hepatitis B vaccinations in 1984. Persons at high or intermediate risk, such as people with renal disease or hemophilia, homosexual men, and clients of institutions for the mentally handicapped are among those who are eligible to receive this benefit. Medicare covers both the costs of the vaccine and its administration by recognized providers. The coinsurance or co-payment applies after the yearly deductible has been met.

## Other helpful information:

- The 2006-2007 Immunizers' Question & Answer Guide to Medicare Coverage of Influenza and Pneumococcal Vaccinations addresses immunizers' commonly asked questions about the administration of influenza and pneumococcal vaccines to Medicare patients can be accessed at the above website.

Locate additional project resources at:

<http://www.esrdnet15.org/QI/STIC%20Book.pdf>  
<http://www.esrdnet15.org/QI/immunize.pdf>  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/home-hcp.htm>