US Launch of 2008T BlueStar™ Hemodialysis Machine Announced

The market availability of the 2008T BlueStar™ hemodialysis machine has been announced by Fresenius Medical Care North America’s Renal Therapies Group. The machine incorporates evolved technologies and improved performance with more than 30 unique enhancements, representing the most comprehensive upgrade in company history, according to a press release form Fresenius.

The 2008T BlueStar machine is designed to provide simpler operation and maintenance with enhanced user control; the desired results include labor and cost savings, improved accuracy, enhanced data stream, and additional treatment options.

Mark Costanzo, president of the Renal Therapies Group at Fresenius Medical Care North America, said, “The new and enhanced 2008T BlueStar hemodialysis machines provide more than 30 unique enhancements to better serve end-stage renal disease patients undergoing dialysis. Our new machines represent a significant step forward for providers and patients who depend upon our life-sustaining technologies, and an exciting continuation of our 30-year commitment to the treatment of end-stage renal disease.”

Enhancements of the upgraded machine include auto start, auto prime, assisted refusion, idle mode, independent conductivity and pH self-test, disinfection log, Patient Cards (optional), low volume therapy, sustained low efficiency dialysis, and enhanced Crit-Line® treatment data.

“Leveraging our history of innovation and industry firsts in renal care, we are pleased to unveil new features that will help providers deliver the highest quality of care to patients receiving hemodialysis both in-center and in the acute care setting,” Robert Kossmann, MD, chief medical officer at Renal Therapies Group at Fresenius Medical Care North America, said. “We believe our 2008T BlueStar machine offers distinct clinical advantages that streamline the complexities of hemodialysis care and enhance patients’ overall treatment experience.”

All enhancements are available for existing 2008T hemodialysis machines through an upgrade process.

Ellipsys® Vascular Access System Cleared for Use at VA Hospital

The US FDA recently cleared the Ellipsys® Vascular Access System for use in the creation of a percutaneous arteriovenous fistula (AVF), a less invasive innovation for patients with end-stage renal disease (ESRD). According to a recent press release, Mark Randel, MD, recently performed the new procedure at the Jack C. Montgomery Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center. The facility is the first VA center to offer the Ellipsys System.

In an interview published in Vantage Point, the official blog of the US Department of Veterans Affairs, Dr. Randel said, “This is a very innovative way of creating vascular access. It’s a game changer, and it transforms a commonly performed traditional surgery into a minimally invasive procedure that will benefit the veterans we serve.”

The system, developed by Avenu Medical in San Jose, uses an endoscopic approach to create the dialysis access. In the procedure, the Ellipsys catheter is advanced through the skin and into a vein, under ultrasound, to create access, leaving the tissue undisturbed.

According to the press release, Avenu has received a US Federal Contractors Service Agreement giving the company the ability to provide the Ellipsys technology to VA facilities nationwide. Ed Chang, cofounder and vice president of marketing at Avenu, said, “We are incredibly proud of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Centers for realizing the great potential of Ellipsys technology that will benefit the heroes of our nation, our military veterans, are among the first to receive this state-of-the-art treatment so they can get the care they need and deserve. Although ESRD is a global problem, the prevalence rate of ESRD among veterans is significantly higher than the general population. Therefore, working with the VA, we can directly address this pressing clinical need and take major steps toward fulfilling a treatment gap.”

Fresenius Medical Care Completes Acquisition of NxStage Medical

Following approval by US antitrust authorities, Fresenius Medical Care has successfully completed the acquisition of NxStage Medical, Inc. Fresenius Medical Care is the world’s largest provider of dialysis products and services; NxStage Medical develops, produces, and markets medical devices used in home dialysis and critical care.

In a press release, Rice Powell, chief executive officer of Fresenius Medical Care, said, “The closing of this transaction is an important milestone in enhancing our patients’ choice of dialysis treatment modality. By combining NxStage’s capabilities with our broad product and service offering, we can help patients to live even more independently. In addition to broadening our product portfolio, this acquisition positions Fresenius Medical Care to benefit from the growing trend toward home-based therapies.”

Bill Valle, Fresenius chief executive officer, added, “It’s a great pleasure to welcome our new NxStage colleagues. With their strong culture of innovation and transformation, they will help us to realize our vision of delivering access to superior patient care and outcomes in a lower-cost-of-care home setting for all the patients we care for. We are excited to execute on a strategy that is good for patients, the healthcare system, and us.”

TeleHealth Services Installs 3000th AV and Entertainment System

In a recent press release, TeleHealth Services announced the completion of its 3000th installation of audiovisual and entertainment systems to serve dialysis centers and patients. TeleHealth systems are in dialysis centers in each of the 50 states, including four of the top five clinical treatment providers, according to the press release. TeleHealth also offers advanced patient engagement and education solutions using patient room televisions and tablets for patients and staff.

Dan Nathan, executive vice president of operations for TeleHealth, said, “For patients in clinics and hospitals, the television offers a distraction during a challenging time. Quality television programming presents clinics and hospitals with a unique opportunity to engage and entertain patients. We work with our dialysis center customers to provide patient entertainment and AV services that improve convenience and satisfaction for patients receiving dialysis treatment, including the latest television equipment and familiar TV programming options.

“Patients appreciate entertainment options and amenities that offer the comforts they have at home. We are committed to providing innovative, turnkey technology solutions that help our hospital and clinic partners provide an exceptional patient experience.”
Illuminating the Decision-Making Process among Patients with Advanced CKD Opting to Forgo Dialysis

For patients with advanced chronic kidney disease (CKD), maintenance dialysis offers life-saving benefits that can include restoration of health and improved quality of life. However, the potential benefits of dialysis in extending life and managing the signs and symptoms of uremia are outweighed by the harms that may be associated with maintenance dialysis for some patients, including substantial treatment burden and the risk of progressive loss of physical, social, and cognitive function.

Current data on decision making regarding dialysis in the United States are largely limited to patients who are receiving maintenance therapy; results of studies reveal that dialysis is often presented to patients as a necessity rather than a treatment choice. Data from the US Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare system suggest that only 14.5% of patients with advanced CKD (or those making decisions on their behalf) opt not to pursue dialysis. Other data indicate that the proportion of patients forgoing dialysis may be even less common in other US healthcare settings.

Susan P. Y. Wong, MD, MS, and colleagues recently conducted an in-depth qualitative analysis to gain a deeper understanding of how decisions not to pursue dialysis occur.

Real-World Long-Term Effectiveness of Sucroferric Oxyhydroxide in Managing Hyperphosphatemia

Patients with advanced chronic kidney disease (CKD) and end-stage renal disease (ESRD) often experience hyperphosphatemia. Due primarily to the progressive inability of the kidneys to appropriately excrete phosphorus, disrupted phosphorus homeostasis leads to phosphorus accumulation. There have been...