DaVita Strives to Improve Quality of Life and Reduce Overall Costs of Kidney Care Through Community-Based Education

DaVita Inc., a leading provider of kidney care services for those diagnosed with chronic kidney failure and disease (CKD), recently introduced its EMPOWER program, a series of free community-based workshops that encourage CKD patients to take control of their health and make informed decisions about their dialysis care.

(Logo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20020729/DAVITALOGO)

Available in more than 40 locations throughout the U.S. and led by a team of DaVita® nurses, renal dietitians and social workers, EMPOWER uses a multidisciplinary approach to educate CKD patients about their disease, delaying its progression and the different treatment options available. Workshops also focus on preparing patients for life on dialysis, or a kidney transplant if needed.

The program's goal is to impact the lives of the more than eight million Americans living with Stage 3 and 4 CKD. To date, DaVita has also reached out to more than 100,000 Americans through its Kidney Education and You® program, which offers health education seminars and useful tools to help prevent kidney disease brought on by risk factors like diabetes and high blood pressure.

"Education is one of the most powerful ways to help people with CKD," says Dori Schatell, MS, executive director of the non-profit Medical Education Institute. "Two different research groups have found that education is even more effective than nephrologist referral at slowing the progression of CKD, ensuring a planned (rather than emergent) dialysis start and even improving survival. The more opportunities patients have to learn about kidney disease, the better they can care for themselves -- and make treatment choices that will fit their lives and enable them to keep their jobs or continue other activities that are meaningful to them."

Workshops are stage-specific, focusing on the unique needs of early stage and late stage CKD patients. Early stage CKD patients learn about how the kidneys function, how to take control of kidney disease and what to expect should the kidneys fail. Late stage CKD patients, those most at risk for kidney failure, learn how to adjust to life on dialysis by controlling their diet, taking the proper medications and choosing the best treatment for their lifestyle. EMPOWER workshops are also open to friends and family members of kidney patients, and encourage their participation.

"Our approach to shaping the future of kidney care is to no longer be just a 'dialysis company', but a kidney care community that strives to make a difference in the lives of all kidney patients," says Kent Thiry, DaVita chairman and CEO. "DaVita believes that by dedicating resources to the full continuum of kidney disease and nephrology practice needs, these efforts will begin to reduce the overall burden on our national healthcare system's limited resource pool."

For more information about the EMPOWER program, including a schedule of upcoming workshops and locations, please call 1-888-MyKidney. DaVita also offers a wide-range of tools designed to help CKD patients manage their dietary and nutritional needs through its user-friendly Web site at http://www.davita.com/.

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About DaVita Inc.

DaVita Inc., a FORTUNE 500® company, is a leading provider of kidney care in the United States, providing dialysis services and education for patients with chronic kidney failure and end stage renal disease. DaVita manages more than 1,300 outpatient facilities and acute units in more than 700 hospitals located in 43 states and the District of Columbia, serving approximately 107,000 patients. As part of DaVita's commitment to building a healthy, caring community, DaVita develops, participates in and donates to numerous programs dedicated to transforming communities and creating positive, sustainable change for children, families and our environment. For more information about DaVita, its kidney education and its community programs, please visit http://www.davita.com/.

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