DaVita, Inc. in Partnership with SCAN Health Plan, Selected for Demonstration Project Aimed at Improving Quality of Life for Dialysis Patients

The Unique Program, chosen by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, will be called VillageHealth, a Medicare Advantage Special Needs Plan for End Stage Renal Disease Beneficiaries

DaVita, Inc. has been selected by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to be one of only a handful of sites nationally to participate in an important four-year demonstration project aimed at improving healthcare delivery and access for people on dialysis. Through a Medicare Advantage Special Needs Plan -- called VillageHealth -- it is hoped that quality of life will be improved for members with end-stage renal disease (ESRD).

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

Partnering with DaVita on this project will be SCAN Health Plan. SCAN is one of the four largest Medicare Advantage Plans in all of California and currently serves more than 75,000 seniors in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties.

In the partnership, DaVita will provide dialysis, DaVita's subsidiary RMS DM, LLC will provide disease management services, and SCAN will serve as the health plan and administrator of the program.

"The quality of life for patients with renal stage disease is significantly compromised as the average dialysis patient spends 14 days a year in the hospital and takes about eight medications a day," said Kent Thiry, Chief Executive Officer of DaVita. "VillageHealth will make an impact by coordinating care and reducing the fragmentation often experienced by patients as they navigate through a highly complex healthcare system that does not effectively support the special needs of chronically ill patients."

Toward that end, VillageHealth is designed with a disease management focus where the patient's medical and psychosocial care is coordinated by an interdisciplinary team consisting of the nephrologist, renal nurse, social worker, dietician and pharmacist.

Each patient will be assigned a renal nurse who will help coordinate the patient's total care, not just renal care, through various care settings such as dialysis centers, hospitals and specialist offices.

Dialysis patients in parts of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties are eligible to participate in this demonstration project. Members will receive their entire Medicare professional and hospital services as well as their prescription benefit (the new Medicare "Part D") through VillageHealth. They will also benefit from a $70 per month Part B premium rebate, no out-of-pocket annual Medicare Part B deductible payment, a pharmacist to help review and manage their medications, and access to a nurse 24/7.

"SCAN's mission has always been to help improve the quality of life of our members, and this project is fully aligned with that goal," said Dr. Tim Schwab, chief medical officer of SCAN. "We are honored to be the only health plan in California designated by CMS to participate in this project and hope that eligible individuals will take advantage of this unique opportunity."

In addition to providing increased quality of life to patients, CMS is also looking to this project to help control rising healthcare costs. Although ESRD Medicare beneficiaries make up a small percentage of the total Medicare population, in 2001 CMS spent $15 billion on ESRD-related care, and that number is projected to double over the next decade.

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