Mental Health Month Highlights Need for Holistic Approach to Patient Care in Medical Community

DENVER, May 4, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- DaVita Kidney Care, a division of DaVita HealthCare Partners Inc. (NYSE: DVA) and a leading provider of kidney care services, recognizes the month of May as Mental Health Month. It brings light to the struggles of people living with invisible illnesses like depression and the difficulties in overcoming those adversities.

"People with kidney disease and their caregivers may find themselves facing depression as they adjust to life on dialysis," said Duane Dunn, director of social work services at DaVita Kidney Care. "In the words of one of our patients, 'dialysis isn't an easy thing to go through, but end-stage renal disease isn't end stage – it's just another stage in your life.'"

Discovering a sense of purpose can be fundamental to a high quality of life on dialysis, especially as people first adjust to life on dialysis and re-enter their communities with new challenges. Whether that purpose derives from working, volunteering, parenting, attending school or other hobbies and interests, the important part is to find the motivation to thrive on dialysis.

For both patients and their caregivers, resource access is a critical component in managing mental health. Here are some tips for thriving while on dialysis:

- **Openly discuss –** Talk with your nephrologist and social worker because they understand where patients struggle most in adjusting and coping to life on dialysis.
- **Seek counseling –** Outpatient services are available in a variety of different agencies and can be accessed by the local Department of Human Services.
- **Find a support group –** Look for support groups that can understand and empathize with what's happening. There are local in-person support groups as well as online options that can help provide guidance.
- **Seek Kidney Disease Education –** Attending a kidney disease education class allows attendees to ask questions about kidney disease and get an understanding of life on dialysis.
- **Continue to work –** Dialysis patients who continue to work are 21 percent less likely to experience symptoms of depression, according to a study published in the Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology. Working may provide a sense of purpose and a positive distraction from dialysis, all of which help contribute to a better quality of life.

DaVita Kidney Care recently launched its Empowering Patients Program, designed to enhance social workers' skill sets to further help improve patients' quality of life through behavioral activation, mindfulness and coping skills. A poster on this program was presented during the National Kidney Foundation Spring Clinical Meeting in April 2015 and was recognized as a "Healthcare Professional Top Poster." The poster highlighted symptom-targeted interventions (STI) by social workers to help decrease patients' missed dialysis treatments. Aspects of the program included deep breathing, coping thoughts and behavior activation. Results suggest that a social-worker-based STI program improved quality of life for patients involved.

DaVita Kidney Care has shown itself to be a leader in putting quality at the forefront of the conversation. This has been recognized by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) with the Five-Star Rating System and CMS' Quality Incentive Program (QIP). DaVita Kidney Care was recognized with 50 percent of its centers receiving a four- or five-star rating. With QIP, 98.5 percent of DaVita Kidney Care's centers rated among the top clinical performance tiers in the country.

About DaVita Kidney Care

DaVita Kidney Care is a division of DaVita HealthCare Partners Inc., a Fortune 500(r) company that, through its operating divisions, provides a variety of health care services to patient populations throughout the United States and abroad. A leading provider of dialysis services in the United States, DaVita Kidney Care treats patients with chronic kidney failure and end stage renal disease. DaVita Kidney Care strives to improve patients' quality of life by innovating clinical care, and by offering integrated treatment plans, personalized care teams and convenient health-management services. As of Dec. 31, 2014, DaVita Kidney Care operated or provided administrative services at 2,179 outpatient dialysis centers located in the United States serving approximately 173,000 patients. The company also operated 91 outpatient dialysis centers located in 10 countries outside the United States. DaVita Kidney Care supports numerous programs dedicated to creating positive, sustainable change in communities around the world. The company's leadership development initiatives and social responsibility efforts have been recognized by Fortune, Modern Healthcare, Newsweek and WorldBlu. For more information, please visit DaVita.com.

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