

HOW TO IMPROVE **PATIENT RETENTION** IN DIALYSIS CLINICS





Attracting new patients will always be a valued effort across dialysis clinics. But when most of your time and energy is centered around this, it becomes easy to overlook the importance of retaining existing patients—the foundation of long-term success.

The incentives for making patient retention a priority are abundant. Your profitability will increase significantly through loyal relationships with current patients, while a proactive environment will soothe the potential for patient conflict. A lower patient turnover rate also translates into fewer unknowns about the treatment of patients, as well as a staff that is more motivated and satisfied.

While the benefits may be clear, what might not be as apparent is how clinics can start improving their patient retention.



In this guide, you'll find a variety of tips on how to keep existing patients happy and healthy—elements that will ultimately attract new patients as well.

Creating the Right Environment for Dialysis Patients and Staff

It's a scenario that no dialysis clinic wants to experience.

With frustrations over late starts to their appointments and a lack of involvement in their care planning, a patient becomes disruptive and decides to file a complaint. As the situation escalates, the facility mandates that the patient leaves and transfers them to a new clinic in the local area.

While conflict in the dialysis clinic may be detrimental to patient retention and staff morale, it's not a new trend. Clinics have struggled for years to effectively manage and decrease conflict—a challenge that has spawned supportive initiatives.

One of these initiatives came about in October of 2003 when 46 ESRD stakeholders from 27 organizations first met to discuss the roots of conflict in dialysis clinics. As they explored the barriers to improving patient-conflict resolution, they designed an actionable plan for better patient-provider interactions: Decreasing Patient-Provider Conflict (DPC).



- C**reate a Calm Environment
- O**pen Yourself to Understanding Others
- N**eed a Nonjudgmental Approach
- F**ocus on the Issue
- L**ook for Solutions
- I**mplement Agreement
- C**ontinue to Communicate
- T**ake Another Look

The goal of the DPC is to provide dialysis clinics with the resources they need to **manage and reduce conflict**. While each training step focuses on a different piece of the puzzle, the goal is the same: to create an environment that aligns with the expectations of both patients and staff. Bridging this gap ensures that both parties are confident in the quality of care provided and satisfied with their current clinical relationship.

To create the right facility culture for this purpose and improve patient retention, it's important to weigh the different factors that patients value most.

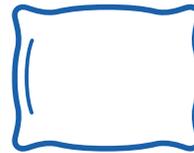


What Patients Value Most in Dialysis Clinics



OFFER AMENITIES

With hours spent in a dialysis center each week, patients can quickly run out of ways to occupy their time. Investing in amenities for your facility can make all the difference in how this time passes. For instance, with WiFi capabilities and several electrical outlets, patients can get caught up on work, chat with friends or watch movies. Other amenities that can be beneficial to this end are televisions, heated blankets and specialized massage chairs.



PROVIDE COMFORTABLE SPACE

When patients come to a dialysis clinic, they want their experience to be as comfortable as possible. By introducing comfort measures like adjustable chairs, blankets and televisions to your facility, you can generate substantially better patient satisfaction scores.



MONITOR NOISE LEVELS

The mixture of alarms, medical carts and loud conversations can easily create a disruptive patient experience. And when combined with the anxiety of the appointment itself, this can only add further stress to the situation. Posting signs about voice levels, purchasing quieter equipment and responding promptly to alarms are all effective ways for keeping loud noises to a minimum and improving patient retention.



KEEP THE FACILITY CLEAN

The appearance of a facility can speak volumes to patients. So when areas are disorganized or poorly cleaned, it can make individuals wary about a clinic's ability to do its job. Not to mention, it introduces safety concerns about whether or not hemodialysis stations have been properly disinfected. By keeping your facility clean, you show patients you are committed to making their experience an efficient and safe one.

Effective Communication

Effective communication is an important tool for improving patient care and satisfaction. This is true of [conversations between patients and staff](#), as well as interactions between employees. Making collaboration a priority can help your facility establish the right lines of communication.



AVOID SILOED INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Operating in silos can place dialysis facilities at a disadvantage. For example, a technician learns about a common patient concern but fails to communicate that information with other departments. This creates a missed opportunity to optimize internal processes and improve patient retention. By breaking down these silos, you can foster greater collaboration between your staff and deliver better care to patients.



EMPOWER PATIENTS TO ASK QUESTIONS

Asking questions in the healthcare setting can be intimidating for patients. They might feel vulnerable based on the education of the clinician or anxious about taking up too much of their time. While avoiding overscheduling can help alleviate some of these issues, it's also crucial to establish an encouraging environment where patients feel comfortable asking questions.



INVOLVE PATIENTS IN THEIR CARE PLANNING

When creating a care plan for a patient, clinicians tend to write things up and have the patient sign the document. While this approach may be efficient, it skips involving patients in the care planning process. Making an effort to go through care plans with patients—as well as their families and significant others—gives them a sense of ownership of their care and builds the foundation for more successful outcomes.

Proactive Safety

While it may not always be apparent, a significant percentage of dialysis patients are fearful of medical mistakes. In fact, one survey showed that [48.6% of hemodialysis patients](#) “sometimes to always” carry this concern. Creating a culture of safety can help ease patients’ worries while keeping them in the chair and out of the hospital.

ESTABLISH PATIENT SAFETY PROGRAMS

Patient safety should be a collaboration between different departments. Establishing a patient safety committee helps build these connections and foster a culture that values proactive safety and education. By closely monitoring relevant metrics, collecting patient feedback and researching industry advancements, dialysis clinics can not only report problems but also develop plans for solving them.

Ongoing training is also important for fostering improvement and consistency in patient care. One example is the [5-Diamond Patient Safety Program](#), an educational, online program available to dialysis clinics across the nation. With 18 different modules surrounding patient safety concepts, the resource helps clinics become more aware of, advocate for and create a safety culture that will improve patient retention.

INVEST IN THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

When you invest in the right technology—like Transonic’s HD03 Monitor—you invest in a healthier future for your patients. In the case of dialysis, poor vascular access flow can easily lead to discomfort for patients and potential complications. Transonic’s HD03 Monitor features surveillance capabilities that alert clinicians to patients with high risk for access failure. These patients can be added to a built-in ‘alert’ list that ensures they are monitored more frequently to ensure positive outcomes. The addition of intuitive operator guidelines that feature prompts and reminders helps ensure a better quality of care for every patient in your clinic.



What Better Patient Retention Means For Your Dialysis Clinic



INCREASED PROFITABILITY

Patient retention offers significant financial incentives to clinics. Rather than having to focus on continuously bringing in new patients, your facility can leverage the loyal relationships that they've already achieved with existing patients.



FEWER UNKNOWNNS

A high patient turnover means always having to adjust to new patients and fill the chair again. Retaining existing patients eliminates many of these unknowns and paints a much clearer picture of how treatment sessions will go.



LESS PATIENT CONFLICT

Conflicts between a clinic and a patient can create stress on both sides. By taking a more proactive approach to establishing a safe and healthy environment, it's less likely that conflicts will occur and more likely that better outcomes will be achieved.



SATISFIED STAFF

When patients are doing well and receiving better care, this has a positive impact on your staff as well. They will feel more motivated when they have the tools and education to make patient-centered care a priority.

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interactions with your patients, keeping them
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