

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A

VASCULAR — ACCESS — COORDINATOR



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Consider this scenario...

Jane comes to your clinic for dialysis on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. When she arrives for her Wednesday treatment, her access is failing.

What happened?

The Monday nurses noticed swelling in Jane's arm, but due to a breakdown in communication, the Wednesday nurses weren't notified. Because of this, Jane has to miss her treatments to fix her access. Now your clinic is taking a financial hit from the loss of her treatments, and the quality of care for Jane — and possibly your other patients — isn't where it should be. This story isn't as unusual as you might think. Actually, it's quite common. For clinics that experience issues like these regularly, continuity of care is a major concern. On top of trying to fix issues like Jane's, your facility likely must justify every hiring decision, a big hurdle to bringing on more staff to help improve continuity of care.

What if one new hire could solve this problem?

What is a Vascular Access Coordinator?

A vascular access coordinator focuses on the vascular access needs of patients. But a vascular access coordinator does much more than simply tend to patients. A vascular access coordinator is also skilled at:

- Improving patient outcomes
- Reducing the cost of vascular interventions
- Saving nephrologists and staff time by ensuring the access is healthy and functioning
- Improving communication among all levels of dialysis staff and the vascular access care team.

Could My Clinic Benefit from a Vascular Access Coordinator? How to Tell

If your clinic is experiencing these issues, a vascular access coordinator may be able to help alleviate them:

- Increased access complication rates
- No accountability for access monitoring
- Staff communication issues

A Day in the Life of a Vascular Access Coordinator

Whether you're looking to hire a vascular access coordinator or interested in taking on the role yourself, you may be wondering what a day in life of a vascular access coordinator looks like.



To give you a clearer picture of how this role works, here is a printer-friendly sample schedule of what a vascular access coordinator's day could entail.

A Day in the Life of a Vascular Access Coordinator

8:00am – 8:30am	URGENT ISSUES (Patients with a clotted access, a catheter not working, showing signs of infection, unable to get a needle in, or someone who needs to go to the hospital)	Nursing Station
8:30am – 8:40am	TEAM HUDDLE	Nursing Station
8:40am – 9:40am	PATIENT ROUNDS	Patient Care Floor
9:40am – 10:30am	Action Item Follow-up from Rounds, Care Plan Meetings, Quality Improvement Data Collections and Tasks	Nursing Station
10:30am – 10:45am	BREAK	Break Room
10:45am – 12:00pm	ASSIST WITH SHIFT TURNOVER Patient Assessments, Cannulation Assistance, Patient Education	Patient Care Floor
12:00pm – 12:30pm	URGENT ISSUES	Nursing Station
12:30pm – 1:00pm	LUNCH	Break Room
1:00pm – 1:10pm	TEAM HUDDLE IF NEEDED	Nursing Station
1:10pm – 2:10pm	PATIENT ROUNDS	Patient Care Floor
2:10pm – 3:00pm	Action Item Follow-up from Rounds, Care Plan Meetings, Quality Improvement Data Collections and Tasks	Nursing Station
3:00pm – 4:30pm	ASSIST WITH SHIFT TURNOVER Patient Assessments, Cannulation Assistance, Patient Education	Patient Care Floor
4:30pm – 5:30pm	3RD SHIFT PATIENT ROUNDS Action Item Follow-up from Rounds, Care Plan Meetings, Quality Improvement Data Collections and Tasks	Nursing Station & Patient Care Floor

Remember Jane's story? If the staff caring for Jane would have used huddles, it's likely her issue would have been resolved in a timely manner without her having to miss treatments.

The healthcare advocacy group **Pioneer Network** summarizes the benefits of the huddle well.

"When information is shared through a huddle," they note, "everyone hears EXACTLY the same information and can share what they know. The group can share what they know. The group can problem-solve any issues on the spot. Staff closest to the [patient] know the [patient] best. They have vital information and effective ideas. When they understand the problem and shape the solution, they have the best chance to implement it well."

How does a Huddle Work?

This kind of huddle won't be like what you see on the football field. Rather, it's meant to serve as a quick meeting where your hemodialysis staff can share important information about patient care.

Huddles can occur:

- When there is a shift change
- When a new employee or patient arrives
- Before employees go on a break
- If an issue occurs that needs the resources of the entire team

These huddles can last between five and 15 minutes, should start at the same time and in the same place each day, and can greatly improve communication among staff.



The Vascular Access Coordinator Position in Real Life: 2 Case Studies

Let's take a look at two of the biggest players in the hemodialysis space — DaVita Kidney Care and Fresenius Medical Care. These two companies control 84 percent of the hemodialysis market in the United States and take different approaches to vascular access management in their clinics.

Case Study: Fresenius' Timely Catheter Removal Pilot Program

Fresenius' vascular care professionals are a team of physicians who focus on dialysis access management. The company operates vascular care centers, which are separate outpatient facilities from its dialysis centers. To assist with catheter removal, it has launched a Timely Catheter Removal pilot program. This program focuses on:

- Recognizing and evaluating those patients with catheters either by hanging brightly colored markers on their machines or grouping together in areas of the clinic
- Working to avoid catheter-related infections
- Creating partnerships with local vascular access professionals
- Enhancing clinic communication and coordination of care processes
- Benchmarking steps to achieving a usable permanent access in 90 days or less

Case Study: DaVita's Vascular Access Managers

Serving as the central source of vascular access information in a clinic, DaVita's vascular access managers are charged with:

- Collecting vascular access data
- Educating patients on access options
- Coordinating care for access patients
- Heading up the communication and collaboration with the care team to improve access-related outcomes.

These huddles can last between five and 15 minutes, should start at the same time and in the same place each day, and can greatly improve communication among staff.

How to Create the Vascular Access Coordinator Role or Job Description

Who can be a Vascular Access Coordinator?

Because the idea of a vascular access coordinator is fairly new, and each clinic or program could have varying needs for a coordinator to address, there is no “standard” vascular access coordinator candidate or job description. The **Fistula First** initiative has recommended the position be filled by someone who:

- Is an experienced hemodialysis healthcare worker (nurse, nurse practitioner, advanced practice nurse, dialysis technician and in some cases a renal dietitian or nephrology social worker). This can be a current employee who takes on additional duties, or you can hire someone to fill the role
- Has the necessary certifications in hemodialysis or nephrology
- Is proficient in vascular access care and management and is committed to quality assessment and performance improvement

A Sample Vascular Access Coordinator Job Description

Fistula First includes these essential job functions in its example job description:

- Collect, track and trend accurate and complete vascular access data
- Educate patients in the care and management of vascular accesses
- Monitor vascular access with focus on identifying access dysfunction prior to stenosis and clotting
- Monitor central venous catheters (CVC) with a goal to reduce catheters
- Facilitate the referral process for diagnosis of accesses with dysfunction or other pathology
- Facilitate referral for interventional or surgical treatment appropriate for diagnosed vascular access dysfunction
- Monitor documentation of vascular access care, intervention and outcomes
- Participate in Vascular Access QAPI improvements and outcomes

“The vascular access coordinator role must include being a patient advocate, a teacher (for patients and colleagues), and the access liaison (communicator extraordinaire). The coordinator must be flexible and mobile, assertive and accountable, a manager of the CQI process, a researcher, and last but not least, a collaborator. There is no ‘I’ in team,” notes [nephrology nurse Leslie Dinwiddie](#).

Resources for Vascular Access Coordinators

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- [Vascular Access Society of the Americas](#)
- [American Nephrology Nurses Association](#)
- [American Society of Nephrology](#)
- [Renal Physicians Association](#)
- [Association for Vascular Access](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Fistula First](#)
- [Vessel Healthv](#)
- [American Journal of Kidney Diseases Blog](#)
- [Renal Fellow Network](#)
- [Keeping Kidney Patients Safe](#)
- [End Stage Renal Disease National Coordinating Center](#)

THE TECHNOLOGY THAT HELPS VACS EXCEL

The right technology can help support your vascular access coordinator as well as protect your patients. You know the importance of reducing missed treatments due to access issues. But there is another factor to consider — cardiac function.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death among hemodialysis patients. **Assessing cardiac function** using state of the art technology during treatments can help save lives. **Flow-based vascular access surveillance technology** can help you safeguard the health of your patient's vascular access by measuring delivered blood flow, vascular access recirculation, vascular access flow and cardiac output. This technology works by having paired sensors pass ultrasound waves through dialysis tubing, these measurements take less than 10 minutes per patient.

In Conclusion

It doesn't take a big financial investment to make lasting improvements to communication and patient care in your facility. Whether you choose to hire from outside your organization or one of your staff members wants to take on the role, adding a vascular access coordinator can make a big impact on how your facility operates and the care your patients receive.

About Transonic

Transonic Systems Inc. is a global manufacturer of innovative biomedical measurement equipment. Founded in 1983, Transonic sells gold standard transit-time ultrasound flowmeters and monitors for surgical, hemodialysis, pediatric critical care, perfusion, interventional radiology and research applications. Assessing the cardiac function of your hemodialysis patients doesn't have to be time-consuming or invasive. In fact, all it takes is an extra step in the hemodialysis procedure and an extra set of tubing.

See how easy it can be to safeguard your patients' well-being by adding cardiac assessment to your hemodialysis care.

Request a demo of Transonic's vascular access technology today.

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)



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