



## **WHO WE ARE**

**AV Fistula First Breakthrough Initiative** is a CMS supported coalition of renal community stakeholders working together to increase the use of AV fistulas by individuals who need hemodialysis. Through promoting the guidelines of the National Kidney Foundation/Kidney Disease Outcomes Quality Initiative, our mission is to meet the CMS goal of increasing the percentage of hemodialysis patients using AV fistulas to 66% by 2009 nationwide. The AV Fistula First national coalition has already accomplished considerable improvement in the use of AV fistulas among appropriate patients with end-stage renal disease. Many of your colleagues participate in the various task forces and provide much needed guidance, direction, and assistance in achieving and sustaining this progress.

## **WHY THIS MATTERS**

Medical care, particularly of ESRD patients, is expensive! For example, it has been estimated that the vascular access cost/patient/year with a catheter is \$10,000 while with an AV fistula it is \$4,000. Yet there is little correlation between high costs and high quality. There are a number of catheters in use for dialysis vascular access, many for longer than ninety days. Both clinicians and payers must address catheters, because they result in increased hospitalizations, longer lengths of stay, higher rates of infection, and increased mortality. Payers occupy a singular and primary position in the spectrum of participants who can significantly reduce spending in this area with negligible additional cost.

## **WHAT YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN DO**

Payers have a unique opportunity to develop *internal incentives for practitioners* to place the most effective and inexpensive vascular access for the benefit of all. Payment systems, benefit design, and internal oversight of medical practitioners can foster practice improvement, if well designed and carefully implemented (see suggestions in the Priority Recommendations document). The insights and experience of key payers across the country can impact the cost of early ESRD care while improving the quality of care.

We have an unparalleled opportunity to work together to design a system that works for patients, providers and payers. Enclosed are some documents developed by the AV Fistula First Breakthrough Coalition for reference.

We ask you to join with us as partners to design and develop strategies to both improve patient care and reduce the cost of care. The challenge is before us and together we can achieve remarkable progress.

This educational item was produced through the AV Fistula First Breakthrough Initiative Coalition, sponsored by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the DHHS, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. The author(s) assume full responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of the ideas presented, and welcome any comments and experiences with this product.