



CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE EMERGENCY TRIAGE OF A DIALYSIS PATIENT

IF A DIALYSIS PATIENT PRESENTS FOR EMERGENCY TREATMENT, BE SURE THEIR DIALYSIS ACCESS IS NOT USED FOR ANYTHING OTHER THAN A DIALYSIS TREATMENT!

- ✓ **Observe patient** for obvious signs of distress
 - Respirations
 - Gait
 - State of Awareness
- ✓ **Record patient's vital signs**
 - Blood Pressure
 - Pulse
 - Temperature
- ✓ **Auscultate patient's lung sounds** (Is there good air exchange? Do the lungs sound "wet" or "diminished?" If so, this may signal fluid overload.)
- ✓ **Auscultate patient's heart sounds** (Is the heart rhythm normal or irregular? Irregular heart rhythm may be the result of elevated serum potassium.)
- ✓ **Weigh patient** (Compare current weight with last recorded post treatment weight. If the last recorded weight is not available, ask patient if they know their dry weight. If patient has a significant weight gain, ask "How many days since your last treatment? "How much do you normally gain between treatments? Is patient short of breath? Are there obvious signs of edema in face, abdomen or ankles? Ask "Have you been following your emergency dialysis diet?")
 - Patients have been instructed to start their "emergency diet" as soon as an emergency situation is predicted or occurs.
 - The emergency diet plan limits protein, potassium, salt and fluid intake more strictly than the regular renal diet. (Patients have been instructed to, at least, cut their normal fluid intake in half, but preferably not drink more than what is required to swallow their medications.)
- ✓ If possible, and patient hasn't had dialysis in excess of 3 days, **consider performing a STAT Chem Panel.**
- ✓ **Assess condition of patient's dialysis access.** (If graft or fistula, palpate the access for thrill, pulsing/vibration, and auscultate for bruit, whooshing sound,. If either of these are absent, the patient may require surgical procedure for de-clotting prior to next treatment. Is patient's skin intact on and around the access? (fistula, graft or catheter) Are there any signs of redness, swelling or drainage? Does the skin feel warm to the touch? If patient presents with dialysis catheter, be sure that catheter dressing is dry and intact.)
- ✓ If **peritoneal dialysis (PD) patient** presents, assess the availability of their PD supplies.
- ✓ Assess patient's **access to their prescribed medications.**