

Maryland Dialysis Center Prepares for Tag-Implantation Project

The Independent Dialysis Foundation hopes the trial, carried out in conjunction with VeriChip, will help spare its patients from unnecessary procedures and medications.

By Beth Bacheldor

Sept. 3, 2007—[Independent Dialysis Foundation](#) (IDF), a not-for-profit operator of dialysis centers in Maryland, has teamed with [VeriChip](#) to test the implantation of RFID chips in its patients to make it easier to access their health records during an emergency.

Located in Delray Beach, Fla., VeriChip makes the VeriMed patient identification system, consisting of RFID interrogators and 134 kHz RFID tags compliant with the ISO 11784 and 11785 standards, as well as associated software and a VeriChip-hosted patient information database. Encased in glass and about the size of a rice grain, the tags are designed to be implanted, via syringe, just under the skin of a patients' arm. Each tag is encoded with a unique 16-digit ID number, which is associated with the patient's medical records stored in the VeriChip-hosted database.

When a patient visits a hospital equipped with the VeriMed system, personnel can read that individual's unique ID number by waving an interrogator over the general area of the implanted chip, then accessing the secure database containing the patient's identity and medical information. The project is designed to test the functionality of the RFID implant in real-life scenarios.

"Many dialysis patients have chronic diseases. Many are diabetic, and many have cardiac disease such as hypertension. And because of that, they often have medical emergencies that put them in the ER," says Dr. John Sadler, CEO and founder of IDF, which is affiliated with the [University of Maryland](#) and serves about 500 patients in eight outpatient centers and four hospitals throughout Maryland. "One of our biggest problems is that they go to ER, but there isn't medical history easily available, and the patients can't always provide it, so the staff does things there that are not needed and not appropriate for the care of [that] patient."

Sometime this month, Sadler and a team of IDF physicians plan to begin meeting with patients and their families one-on-one to explain the VeriMed system. Participation is voluntary, Sadler says, but IDF and VeriChip hope to enroll at least 50 percent of IDF's patients in the trial. Sadler adds that he plans to have a VeriMed tag embedded in his own arm as well.

Once a patient signs up for the pilot, IDF physicians who have been granted secure access to the VeriMed database will input that individual's medical information. This would include the name of the primary physician, diagnoses, where the patient receives treatment, the dialysis schedule, medications, any known allergies, recent lab-test data and so forth.

Many of the approximately 55 ER departments in Maryland's hospitals have already received the necessary equipment and training from VeriChip to participate in the trial, Sadler says, which is expected to run one to

two years. Overall, VeriChip reports, approximately 600 U.S. health-care facilities—mostly hospitals, and most on the East Coast—have signed on to the VeriMed network.

RELATED_ARTICLES Sadler says he hopes the implantable RFID chips, once linked with patients' medical records, will help prevent unnecessary treatment, improving patient care and lowering associated treatment costs. "If this can help avoid expensive care, hospitalizations and inappropriate medications," he says, " that'll avoid unnecessary care, and that'll save money and result in better care for the patients."

Earlier this summer, VeriChip launched a similar project involving Alzheimer's Community Care (ACC), a West Palm Beach, Fla., provider of support to Alzheimer's patients and their caretakers. As part of the two-year trial, ACC began implanting VeriMed RFID chips in about 200 clients of the organization who volunteered for the project (see Alzheimer's Care Center to Carry Out VeriChip Pilot).

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