

BENEFIT OF USING VISUAL TEACHING TOOLS FOR PHOSPHORUS CONTROL IN HEMODIALYSIS UNIT

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Renal dialysis patients need continuous education related to their clinical care and well being. It is important to present the same educational topics in different formats with different tools to keep the patients' motivated. Patients at a Californian hemodialysis unit, with a high non-literate rate (30%) and high percentage of Spanish speaking only population (30%), were experiencing high serum phosphorus levels. The center's registered dietitian developed a new visual teaching tool/game call "Phosphorus Island" with the goal of improving the patients' phosphorus levels. Baseline values (reported in December, 2007) showed that 40% of the 83 hemodialysis patients had serum P >5.5 and 10% of those had serum P >8.0.

In January 2008, Phosphorus Island was constructed on the unit's lobby wall. Pictorial elements were used to represent phosphorus levels <5.5 and >5.5. Then related items showed the "Consequences of Poor Phosphorus control" including causes of SHPT and "Low P food substitutes for high P foods" in Spanish. After 9 months of education using Phosphorus Island, 75% of patients had serum P <5.5 and only 6% had P >8.

Visually reminding patients if they were "safe" ($P \leq 5.5$) or "drowning" ($P > 5.5$) has greatly improved serum phosphorus levels in our hemodialysis unit despite lack of language skills or literacy. Improving serum phosphorus levels in new, fun, visual way has decreased the risk of calcification in this hemodialysis population and decreased the patients' risk of mortality.