

Tips for Dialysis Staff to Identify and Manage Retaliation



Fear of retaliation is common among dialysis patients. It is never okay for a patient to feel punished by anyone in the dialysis clinic.

*tool adapted from:

Health Services Advisory Group, ESRD Network 15. (n.d.). *Retaliation for Filing Grievances-Does It Exist?* [Brochure].

https://www.hsag.com/contentassets/s/8a8df7b6f07641469ea158189df37b1d/nw15_retaliation-and-grievances-tip-sheet-and-activity_final_508.pdf

The Renal Network ESRD Network 10 (n.d.). *Should You Self-Check* [poster]. Indianapolis, IN. Author

<http://therenalnetwork.org/download/staff-retaliation-poster/>

Retaliation is treating an individual differently (usually in a negative manner) as a result of that individual voicing a concern about you. Retaliation can be intentional or unintentional, blatant or subtle. Retaliation is an act of revenge.

What patients have said about retaliation:

- “Retaliation is occurring. I’ve experienced it. It’s often subtle, for example, patients can be ignored when making a simple request.”
- “I have felt isolated after voicing a concern. My support system (at dialysis) is the staff, so it hurts when they stop talking to me.”
- “I have received comments from a manager and nurse that feel like a threat, such as, ‘if you’re not happy here, you can always transfer to another facility.’”

Things said or done in a moment of frustration, even a joke, can have lasting impact. It is important to stay professional and maintain appropriate boundaries with patients. These are some tips to consider when communication becomes difficult:

- Be objective – don’t take things personally
- Acknowledge anger or hurt feelings
- Notice your actions – they speak louder than words
- Give yourself time to regroup
- Consider mediation – working with a third party can help clarify different points of view
- Remain neutral – don’t be biased by other peoples’ opinions or stereotypes

Sometimes it is difficult to remember patients don’t feel well and to respond with empathy. If you need ideas about how to speak with patients in challenging situation try asking for help from:

- The Clinic Administrator,
- The Clinic Social Worker, or
- Your ESRD Network.

<https://esrdncc.org/en/ESRD-network-map/>