

## NKC Reinvents Special Care Service for Very Ill Dialysis Patients

By Joyce F. Jackson, President and CEO



After many years on the first floor of Haviland Kidney Center at 700 Broadway, Northwest Kidney Centers' Special Care Unit will move its operations to bright, fresh areas in NKC's two newest dialysis centers, in Kent and on Seattle's Cherry Hill.

People living south of Seattle are now transferring to the new Kent Kidney Center near Highway 167 and Willis Road. This unit has seven beds. Patients will spend less time traveling to and from dialysis.

When the new Seattle Kidney Center at 548 15th Ave. opens this spring, Seattle and Eastside Special Care Unit patients will dialyze there in a 15-bed unit.

Some other patients will "graduate" out of Special Care because their health does not require this level of care. They will dialyze in the NKC unit that serves the area where they live.

In February, NKC opened Special Care Services at the Kent Kidney Center, marking the first time in our 47-year history that we have offered intensive care service outside of downtown Seattle.

It is now NKC policy that Special Care patients be admitted to the Special Care unit located

closest to where they live. At least one quarter of NKC's most frail and fragile patients live south of Seattle. By mid-April, 25 of them will have transferred from Haviland Special Care to Kent because it's closer to home.

Special Care at NKC will be the same in the two units. Our vision for Special Care is that it is the finest dialysis treatment service tailored for the very ill and for those who seek a palliative care approach (focusing on pain management and comfort)—sometimes during the last phase of their life journey. At Special Care, ongoing treatment is a thoughtful decision, part of a care plan developed with patients and their families. Family involvement is very important.

To prepare for the changes, NKC has spent six months re-defining the mission, vision and policies of Special Care. Planning leaders were Dr. Vilma Quijada and Dr. Danny Hu, co-medical directors for Kent Kidney Center, and Dr. Mike Kelly, medical director of Special Care-Seattle.

The medical director of each unit or another designated staff member must make the decision to accept a patient to Special Care before treatment starts there. NKC may not admit a new or transferred patient to Special Care if we cannot provide safe or medically appropriate care due to the patient's medical condition and/or health care and support needs.

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## Special Care Reinvented

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Patients with behavior issues or who need isolation because of communicable diseases will be treated elsewhere at NKC.

Special Care is an outpatient treatment service for “special needs” dialysis patients, those whose physical, medical or mental condition is complicated, unstable and fragile, on a temporary or permanent basis.

Special Care includes nursing care oriented to patients’ needs: personal care assistance, management of multiple medications, a bed for treatment, and a greater staff-to-patient ratio for care and monitoring than in other NKC outpatient dialysis units.

Special Care also can provide care coordination with nursing homes, access to a chaplain, referral for ethics and palliative care consultation, and coordination with hospice.

Special Care is a limited resource and very expensive. Medicare and Medicaid do not pay NKC more for it, so Special Care is NKC’s most costly community benefit program. We are pleased that we can now make it available closer to home for those in need.

## NxStage Recognizes NKC for Promoting Home Dialysis

Northwest Kidney Centers received the NxStage 2008 MVP Award for its commitment to home frequent dialysis therapy. NKC is second in the country among dialysis providers for training new patients, with 69 patients now in

training or dialyzing at home. (Nationally, 3,000 patients use NxStage and 500 were trained on NxStage last year.) NKC now has 54 home patients on NxStage and 15 using the B-Braun home dialysis machines.

Many patients report that they feel much better when they get frequent treatments at home rather than dialyzing three times a week in a center.

## Our Heroes—Metro Access, Hopelink Van Services

Northwest Kidney Centers president and CEO Joyce Jackson wrote a letter to the editor of *The Seattle Times*, published online Jan. 2, expressing gratitude to Metro Access and Hopelink transportation services.

Both agencies worked tirelessly to get patients to dialysis throughout the winter’s big snows. In good weather these services bring almost half of NKC’s 1,100 in-center patients to dialysis. When snow and ice packed the roads, they juggled schedules nonstop so drivers could get hundreds of patients to life-sustaining dialysis.

This is not the first time these van services have gone out of their way to take care of patients in urgent situations. They deserve our gratitude.

## NKC Is Well Equipped To Weather Financial Storm

By Scott Strandjord, Vice President of Finance



In the past few months, Northwest Kidney Centers (NKC) has navigated the

momentous economic storm that swept the world. Fortunately,

NKC benefited from the wise guidance of leadership and a prudent Board in prior years. A strong balance sheet, based on careful investment and conserving cash, prepared the organization for the tempest. As a community-based health care provider, we would like to share with you our current financial position.

For the first half of our current fiscal year, July 1 through Dec. 31, 2008, we have provided as many patient treatments as expected, slightly more than last year at this time. Payments for that patient care exceeded budget by roughly 4 percent, while our expenses are essentially on target.

Contributions from our generous donors are much higher than expected, and we are on track to provide the community programs and services envisioned for the year.

The only negative aspect to NKC's financial performance relates to the economic storm. Since last July 1, the value of our investment portfolio has declined by roughly 10.6 percent.

We held the decline to this relatively low percentage because we follow conservative policies about the mix of

stocks and fixed income (bonds and money market) investments.

While our stocks tended to mirror the overall stock market performance, declining by roughly 33 percent, the value of our fixed income portfolio has actually increased by 3 percent.

Fortunately, we are not depending upon these investments to complete near-term strategic projects, such as the Seattle Kidney Center (SKC) construction, which is funded from a bond issue. And our cash in the bank is more than enough to cover daily operating expenses.

The bottom line is: including investments, we are well ahead of budget.

We will certainly exercise caution as we chart our course for the future. However, NKC has many strengths, including a great team of care providers, a value for high quality care delivery, excellent community support, and a strong financial position.

Given the critical nature of the care we deliver and the strength of our mission, NKC is well positioned to weather storms that may lie ahead.

Output is published bimonthly for kidney patients and interested persons by Northwest Kidney Centers. It is available on our Web site at [www.nwkidney.org](http://www.nwkidney.org).

Output provides general information and is not intended to serve as a treatment guide. Patients must never change their treatment unless directed to do so by their doctor or transplant team.

Values: Service • Excellence • Integrity • Teamwork • Stewardship  
President and Chief Executive Officer: Joyce F. Jackson



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## When in Doubt, Throw It Out!

By Erin Cox, NKC Dietitian

If you are a dialysis or transplant patient, the recent food recall is a reminder that food safety is especially important for you.

Manufacturers across the country are recalling crackers, snack bars and other processed foods that contain peanut butter infected with salmonella food poisoning from a plant in Georgia.

People with kidney disease don't have a normal immune function to fight off germs. This means that contaminated food is more dangerous for you than others.

The recent recall of peanut products is an example of how a contaminated ingredient can cost lives and impact health.

Take a look at what's in your cupboards, checking for processed foods that have peanut butter flavor. Protein bars, commonly used by dialysis patients, are likely sources of contamination. If you have them, throw them away. Examples of recalled products are listed below:

- Archer Farms Cookies with peanut butter
- Trader Joe's Peanut Butter Chewy Coated and Drizzled Granola Bars, Nutty
- Kroger Select ice cream
- GNC Triglex Peanut Butter Soft Chews
- Premier Nutrition TWISTED and TITAN Bars
- CLIF and LUNA Bars with peanut butter

- ZonePerfect Chocolate Peanut Butter Bars, Peanut Toffee Bars
- Wal-Mart Peanut Butter Cookies
- Little Debbie Peanut Butter Toasty and Peanut Butter Cheese Sandwich
- Keebler Peanut Butter Sandwich Crackers
- Famous Amos Soft Batch Peanut Butter Cookies
- Trader Joe's Sliced Green Apples with Peanut Butter
- LARABAR from General Mills

The Food and Drug Administration offers the following recommendations for consumers:

Check the FDA's Web site to determine which products have been recalled and will be recalled in the coming days. Throw away any product that is on the recall list.

Wash your hands after handling potentially contaminated products.

If you are unsure whether a peanut-containing product is contaminated, don't eat it or feed it to a pet until you get more information about the product.

If you think you may have become ill from eating peanut products, talk to your doctor, the FDA advises.

**For the latest on peanut product safety, go to:**

**[www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/Salmonellatyp.html](http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/Salmonellatyp.html)**

## Take a Supermarket Tour Guided by an NKC Dietitian

When you walk into a grocery store, do you feel overwhelmed? Confused about what to buy? You are not alone.

That is why the dietitians at Northwest Kidney Centers now offer personalized grocery store tours to help patients with kidney disease navigate the supermarket.

We recognize that healthy food choices begin at the grocery store. That is why we want to help you shop! We will walk you through each aisle to help you choose foods that you like and that are good for you.

The tour will include lessons on label reading, comparing prices, meal planning, and much more. Our goal is for you to become a savvy shopper.

Interested? Simply talk to your dietitian to set up a time when you can shop together at your regular neighborhood grocery store. You can reach a dietitian by calling 206-292-2771, ext. 2000. We look forward to shopping with you!

## FDA Warns About Misuse of Skin-Numbing Creams

The FDA has issued a safety alert warning patients to use skin-numbing cream properly. Called “topical anesthetics,” medicines such as EMLA Cream will pass into the bloodstream if the cream is spread over a large skin area, if it is applied to broken or irritated skin, or if the skin temperature increases.

NKC has received reports that many patients have a prescription for a topical anesthetic, apply it at home to large skin areas, then wrap their arms in plastic wrap. The FDA warns about the potential for life-threatening events such as irregular heartbeat, seizures, breathing problems, coma and even death with widespread application of these anesthetics. Talk to your doctor if you have questions about the right way to use numbing medicine.

## New *Eating Well, Living Well* Class Makes its Debut

Northwest Kidney Centers chronic kidney disease (CKD) team is launching an updated nutrition class, *Eating Well, Living Well*. The class helps people with CKD learn to live better and longer through good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle. The instructor is Lacey Stroomer, CKD dietitian.

Topics include:

- Lowering sodium (salt) to lower blood pressure
- Heart-healthy fats to protect the heart and kidneys
- Getting the right amount of protein
- Potassium: where is it and how to lower it?
- Practical tips and lifestyle changes for overall wellness

Locations include Haviland Kidney Center, SeaTac Pavilion, Blagg Pavilion, Totem Lake Kidney Center and Lake Washington Kidney Center. Your doctor can register you by calling Jasmine Alipio at 206-292-2771, ext. 1082.

## Mark Your Calendar for NKC Events This Spring

Planning is under way for NKC's

### KIDNEY Health Fest for African American Families

The Kidney Health Fest for African American Families will be held Saturday, May 2 at the African American Academy, 8311 Beacon Ave. S., Seattle.

Admission is free for this fun event, which includes complimentary health screenings, food samples created by local chefs, entertainment and special activities for children. Master of ceremonies will be Jesse Jones from KING 5 TV.

To volunteer for this or any event, call Syrenka Slettebak at 206-292-2771, ext. 5355 or [syrenka@nwkidney.org](mailto:syrenka@nwkidney.org).



Northwest Kidney Centers Foundation

Breakfast of Hope, Northwest Kidney Centers Foundation's fundraising event, will be held Thursday, May 21. Sign up to be a table captain with Marcie Wirtz at 206-292-2771, ext. 1107 or [wirtzm@nwkidney.org](mailto:wirtzm@nwkidney.org).

## Meetings Especially for People Coping with Kidney Disease

Sunday, March 15  
National Kidney Foundation  
Patient Education Symposium  
Portland

- Embassy Suites Portland Airport
- Registration 9-10 a.m., program 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Free for each patient and one guest (dialysis, transplant, pre-dialysis patients)

Keynote speakers:

- Cody Martin, an ordained minister, conference speaker and chaplain
- Amy Guthrie, a nurse and palliative care specialist for 14 years.

Thursday-Saturday, Sept. 3-5  
American Association of Kidney  
Patients, 36th annual convention  
Denver

- Hyatt Regency Denver
- Educational sessions for CKD and dialysis patients, transplant recipients and family members

Saturday, Oct. 17  
Renal Support Network  
Patient Lifestyle Meeting  
Bellevue

- Red Lion Hotel Bellevue
- 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Many speakers, great food, NKC booth and door prizes
- Watch for more details.

For brochures or more information, contact Sonja Coffman, community and patient relations coordinator, at 206-292-2771, ext. 6923 or [sonja@nwkidney.org](mailto:sonja@nwkidney.org).

## Coach's Corner There's Power in Deciding

by Sharon Pahlka



I like adventure so a few years ago, I did a walking tour of Europe, seeing six countries in 12 days. Little did I know that what I learned on that trip would change the rest of my life.

The year before this trip, my wonderful brother gave me his kidney, ending 19 years of hemodialysis. Just planning this first trip outside the U.S. with my shiny new kidney made me giddy.

I had only one small concern—the friend who was going to travel with me. Spurred by my enthusiasm over my newfound freedom, I brushed the doubt aside and made a promise to myself: “Nothing—and I mean nothing—is going to get in the way of me having a marvelous time.”

This little promise made a huge difference. As it turned out, my friend did not have fun and felt cranky the whole trip.

Here's the good part: I didn't miss a beat. I just let my friend be herself and hooked up with others who wanted to do fun things. I knew as I began each day I would love that day because I had decided ahead of time.

Since then, I try to make a similar decision almost every day. It could be as simple as not letting anything get in the way of a workout to not letting anything prevent me from feeling gratitude for the gift of life.

Of course, life is full of things we can't control and can't choose.

Thanks to my cranky traveling companion, I learned that we can decide ahead of time how to respond to our circumstances. Do this and you will discover the power of deciding.

### Coaching Question

Are you letting circumstances, people, and things take away your joy in your life? Why? What could you decide differently?

### Coaching Tip

Try it. Firmly decide ahead of time that nothing is going to get in the way of a desired result. Notice what happens.

### Quotes

“The last of the human freedoms: to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.”

Viktor Frankl

“As a man thinketh, so is he, and as a man chooseth, so is he.”

The Bible

## Join Others Around the Globe to Celebrate World Kidney Day



World Kidney Day is a global health awareness campaign focused on the importance of our kidneys and on reducing the frequency and impact of kidney disease worldwide.

The observance is held in more than 100 countries on six continents—including the U.S. and Northwest Kidney Centers.

NKC's Web site is featuring a kidney health tip each day for the month leading up to World Kidney Day. Check it out on the home page, [www.nwkidney.org](http://www.nwkidney.org).

Other NKC activities in recognition of the day include:

- Distributing tabletop signs to nephrologists' offices around the region. The signs have the World Kidney Day logo and a reminder that controlling blood pressure is a key way to fight kidney disease.
- Hosting a luncheon with an educational program for kidney doctors' staff members. This year's topic is NKC's new *Eating Well, Living Well* nutrition class.
- Working with local news media to convey how common and treatable kidney disease is.

March 12 is a good day for you to share your experience and knowledge of kidney disease with friends and neighbors. Together, we can work toward a time when World Kidney Day celebrates new ways to fight kidney disease.