



SMaRRT-HD™

Comparative Effectiveness of Two Approaches to Symptom Monitoring in Hemodialysis

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Welcome & Updates!

Welcome to the first SMaRRT-HD Newsletter! This quarterly newsletter will be one of the ways we keep you updated about project activities and showcase our stakeholder partners and team members. We welcome your ideas for content!

This past quarter was a blur of study start-up activities. To name a few- we drafted the study protocol, developed content for a study informational video, refined the SMaRRT-HD symptom monitoring on-line system, and launched the [study website](#). We are grateful to our patient, dialysis clinic, and medical provider partners and especially our Fresenius Medical Care collaborators for their input on the study protocol, SMaRRT-HD system, consent documents, and interview and survey instruments. Stakeholder feedback helped us improve recruitment scripts and consent information documents, align the SMaRRT-HD system with dialysis organization policies, and create symptom guidances that meet clinician needs.

Our patient partners helped us draft the script for a project video that we will use to spark enthusiasm for the study. Starring some of our patient stakeholders, the video will highlight the importance of symptoms to patients, acknowledge that symptoms can be underappreciated by medical teams, describe the SMaRRT-HD study, and explain how this research might help future patients. Video recording will take place in February. We look forward to sharing the final product with you!

We are so excited to have you along for the journey. Thank you for your support, and we look forward to sharing project updates over the coming months!

SMaRRT-HD Study Overview:

- **Overall goal:** To reduce suffering from dialysis-associated symptoms
- **Design:** Cluster-randomized trial
- **Population:** Adults receiving hemodialysis at the participating dialysis clinics who are willing to share their clinical information with the research team
- **Comparators:** 1) twice-monthly electronic symptom monitoring system with supported medical provider follow-up and 2) planned and as needed symptom assessments by clinical personnel without supported medical provider follow-up
- **Outcomes:** *Primary:* symptom severity; *Secondary:* quality of life; specific symptoms such as fatigue, pain, anxiety, and depression; patient activation; hospitalizations; missed hemodialysis treatments; shortened hemodialysis treatments
- **Timeframe:** 12-month follow-up for all outcomes

Stakeholder Spotlight

Derek Forfang is a study Co-Investigator and member of the patient partner workgroup. He has been involved with the SMaRRT-HD project since 2017 and has collaborated with Dr. Flythe for many years on various projects related to dialysis care. As a long-time dialysis patient and now recipient of a kidney transplant, Derek has been at the forefront of battling kidney disease. His work in research began with one goal: he wanted to help others improve their quality of life. He says, "often times, many patients lose what they care about most when they start treatment." Derek hopes to help build a dialysis delivery system in which care revolves around the things that are most important to patients and their lives.



What excites you most about the SMaRRT-HD Study?

- "I like that the SMaRRT-HD system is simple and easy to use. We're using technology to bridge the gap in communication between patients and providers. I think it could be a tool that really improves side effects for patients before and after treatment."

What inspires you?

- "I've seen the worst of kidney disease through my family and my own experience. If I have the opportunity, I want to make sure that we make things better for future generations. I feel like this disease took so much from me - I wasn't able to be active with my kids. I really had to re-purpose myself. So, I started volunteering in the kidney community, and it grew quickly. Kidney community involvement really put the purpose back in my life."

Welcome to the team

We welcomed Rehnema (Ria) Riana to the team in September. Ria is a Research Coordinator and will serve as the primary contact for clinics for the SMaRRT-HD system and will play a key role in enrolling participants in the trial and engaging participating clinic staff. Ria graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill with a B.S in psychology and has been involved in clinical research for over 3 years.

"I am really excited to work on this project, because it puts patients at the center of research. This study is not only using a tool to monitor symptoms, but the tool could have benefits for the quality of life of patients who have been suffering for years. That potential impact really motivates me. My favorite part of my work is just sitting down and talking to people. Whether it's patients or clinicians or researchers - we're all here with a united purpose. I love getting to know everyone's story."



Upcoming Activities

We are excited to convene our first project stakeholder panel on February 28, 2023 in Chapel Hill, NC. The stakeholder panel meeting will coincide with the first in-person patient workgroup meeting and the first in-person investigator meeting. We look forward to getting everyone together! Both the stakeholder meeting and patient workgroup meeting will focus on gathering input about sparking and maintaining enthusiasm about the study among patients and dialysis care team members. Please come with your ideas! We want to hear from you!

Community News & Resources

Publications:

How the Routine Use of Patient-Reported Outcome Measures for Hemodialysis Care Influences Patient-Clinician Communication: A Mixed-Methods Study ([Schick-Makaroff, et al. CJASN 2022](#))

- Using data collected during a cluster randomized controlled trial of 17 hemodialysis clinics in Alberta, Canada, investigators examined how routine use of symptom and quality of life PROMs in hemodialysis care affects patient-clinician communication. Communication was assessed using a validated survey tool. Interviews with patients and nurses and in-clinic observations were also used to gather data about communication. The authors found that routine use of PROMs did not improve patient-clinician communication. The interview and observation data revealed challenges with PROM implementation, including unclear purpose and limited perceived value of PROM use. The SMaRRT-HD study team will incorporate key learnings from this important study in the SMaRRT-HD trial to promote uptake of the symptom PROM system.

Integrating PROMs in Routine Dialysis Care: The Devil Is in the (Implementation) Details ([Flythe. CJASN 2022](#)).

- Jenny Flythe wrote the accompanying editorial in which she highlighted the importance of implementation practices when integrating complex interventions, like PROMs, into routine dialysis care. She described the process of PROM administration and suggested that early and frequent involvement of relevant stakeholders in the development of care processes to support PROM administration and follow-up may help improve implementation.

Meeting:

In May 2022, KDIGO (Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcomes) hosted a controversies conference on symptom-based complications in dialysis. The scope of work and conference presentations are available [here](#). SMaRRT-HD team members Jenny Flythe, Laura Dember, and Mark Unruh all participated. Stay tuned for the upcoming publication of conference findings.

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KEY UPCOMING DATES

- **February 27, 2023** | Patient Partner Working Group Meeting
- **February 28, 2023** | Stakeholder Panel Meeting 1
- **February 28, 2023** | Investigator Meeting
- **June 2023** | SMaRRT-HD Optimization Phase Start