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# News Release

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**October 17, 2012**

### **Expanded dialysis unit opens**



*Photo: Deb Swenson, Certified Clinical Hemodialysis Technician, speaks with Veteran Robert Trujillo while he receives a dialysis treatment in the newly upgraded and expanded dialysis unit.*

Patients in western South Dakota in need of dialysis treatment now have access to improved quality of care, thanks to the seven-station, upgraded dialysis unit at the VA Black Hills Health Care System (BHHCS) Hot Springs Medical Center.

On September 17, the expanded and newly remodeled VA BHHCS dialysis unit started treatments. The expansion included several patient amenities, including lockers for patients to keep personal comfort items while on dialysis. Each station has individual reading lamps and a heating panel above it, so the patients can adjust temperature settings to their liking.

Dialysis units in western South Dakota have been at, or near, capacity in recent years. This has made patient placement difficult and also presented difficulties for dialysis patients traveling to the Black Hills.

“Our expansion should help alleviate those issues to some degree,” said Dialysis Nurse Manager Neil Yager. “We have accepted patients from all across the country over the past 10 years and we enjoy meeting them and learning about the different parts of the country they are from. We will now be able

to provide services for more patients than in the past, especially those transiting through the beautiful Black Hills.”

This recent expansion and remodel will increase the dialysis unit capacity from 20 patients to 28. In 2001, the unit did approximately 2,400 treatments per year. It now averages approximately 2,800 and is expected to continue increased treatments per year.

“We are extremely proud of our dialysis unit and the opportunity to help our Veterans as well as our community,” Yager said. “It gives all a sense of pride to provide exceptional healthcare to our Veterans, and to also be able to provide a service to our community by sharing excess capacity with local residents.”

The dialysis unit in Hot Springs opened in 1973 as a satellite location of the Omaha VA Medical Center. It gained autonomy from Omaha in 1981. In 2001, the first non-veteran sharing agreement patient was admitted to the dialysis unit and it passed its first Medicare inspection and certification. Since 2001, the unit has expanded from three days a week to six days a week and from an average monthly census of seven patients to 18.

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