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**Correction of Anemia with Erythropoietin during the Two-Year Pre-ESRD Period: I.**

**EPO Prescription by Physician Specialty**

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Treatment of anemia with erythropoietin (EPO) in pre-ESRD patients has been reported to be associated with lower post-ESRD mortality. In order to assess EPO treatment of anemia prior to ESRD, we investigated the 2-year pre-ESRD EPO prescribing patterns by physician specialty.

**Methods:** We studied incidence 1995-97 ESRD patients who had Medicare as the primary payer and were 67+ years old, with 2 years of claims prior to the first ESRD service date (FSD). EPO prescription by physician specialty was determined from Part B claims.

Prescribing physician specialties were: nephrology (NE), hematology/oncology (HO), internal medicine (IM), and others (OT). We used categorical data modeling for analysis of EPO treatment based on the patient's first pre-ESRD EPO prescription date and the total number of administrations by physician specialty.

**Results:** There were 11,166 patients who received EPO treatment with physician specialty information (Total administrations = 189,543). Total EPO administrations were prescribed by physician specialty as: NE 49.5%; HO 20.3%; IM 18.2%; and OT 12.0% (family practice: 4.3%, multi-specialty clinic: 4.1%, and general practice-cardiology-etc: 3.6%). The first EPO treatment was prescribed by physician specialty as: NE 55.6%; IM 20.3%; HO 11.6%; and OT 12.6%. The percentages of prescriptions differed ( $P < 0.0001$ ) between physician specialties. The table below presents cumulative percent of patients who initiating EPO by the month prior to FSD.

Month	-24	-18	-12	-9	-6	-3	FSD *
%	3.0	11.3	23.8	33.5	47.4	70.1	100

\* EPO received on FSD was not included.

Conclusions: 1) Nephrologists were the most likely to prescribe pre-ESRD EPO than any other physicians, and 2) More than half of the patients initiated pre-ESRD EPO treatment within six months of the first ESRD service date.