Mission Not Impossible: A Long-Term Parenteral Nutrition Patient’s Dream Vacation to Italy
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Introduction
In this era of tremendous advances in home care capabilities, the role of the home care provider spans far beyond assisting with clinical management and securing the necessary supplies for the home parenteral nutrition (PN) consumers they service. Many long-term home PN consumers are active, productive members of society and challenge their home infusion companies to affirm their infinite freedom and flexibility with their daily routine while on PN. One such freedom is the ability to travel in the United States as well as abroad.

This case study provides a step-by-step outline of the coordinated efforts made by a national home infusion company’s Home Nutrition Support Team (HNST) to successfully permit a PN-dependent consumer to travel abroad on a vacation of a lifetime.

Branch Activities Behind the Scenes

STEP 1: Assemble the Team
Performance Improvement Manager gathers Branch Manager, Clinical and Operational staff for a brainstorming session.

Questions:
1. How should PN be transported?
2. Can temperature control be assured?
3. Can international medical care be coordinated?
4. What amount of supplies will be adequate?
5. How can compliance with federal regulations be achieved?

STEP 2: Delegation of Tasks
Nutrition Team:
1. Obtain patient’s itinerary and date of departure.
   a. Address and phone number of destination.
   b. Name of airport and flight number.
2. Identify overseas medical management.
3. Initiate consumer travel packet.
4. Determine optimal mode of PN transport.

Pharmacy:
1. Obtain physician’s permission to travel.
2. Obtain PN orders. Inquire if other physician orders are needed during travel.
3. Obtain physician orders for supplemental PN bags to have on hand for emergencies or travel delays.
4. Complete pharmacy portion of the consumer travel packet.
5. Assure timely mixing of the PN to accommodate consumer’s travel schedule.

Nursing:
1. Arrange nursing visit for pre- and post-travel lab draws and port flushes.
2. Complete nursing portion of consumer travel packet.
3. Assist with coordination of overseas medical care.

Operations:
1. Timely delivery of all PN and supplies.
2. Home Patient Representative assists consumer in identifying all supplies needed including supplies.
3. Troubleshoot for incompatibility of electrical sources.
4. Provide two pre-programmed infusion pumps.

Performance Improvement Manager:
1. Investigate potential airline travel with PN. If PN travels via plane, should it be stowed with luggage or maintained in the plane’s cabin?
2. Research the Transportation Security Administration’s (TSA) regulations for airline travel with PN.
3. Copy TSA regulations to accompany consumer on flight.
4. Prepare letter on official home care stationery identifying consumer as being PN-dependent and being serviced by the home care company.
5. Review consumer travel packet. Include PN prescription, home care company letter, physician letter of medical need, recent laboratory parameters and TSA regulations.

STEP 3: Establish Optimal Mode of PN Transport
- After review of consumer itinerary, dietetic technician contacts overseas carrier. A five-day time frame is needed for shipment and arrival of PN in Capri.
- HNST confirms with National Nutrition Director, Nutrition Managers and Patient Advocate.
- Consumer and physician are in agreement with home care team that airline travel with the PN is the most reliable means of ensuring safe arrival of PN without interruption of infusion schedule.

STEP 4: Continual Follow-up – the most important step!
- Various disciplines contact the consumer and care partner to refine the travel arrangements.
- Approximately one month is allotted to solidify the travel plan.
- Highlights of the dialogue between the consumer, care partner and the HNST:
  - Several members in the traveling party will assist with transferring the PN and supplies to their destination.
  - Consumer has arranged for a boat to transport the PN and the traveling party across the Gulf of Naples to the Isle of Capri.
  - In Capri, motorized carts will transport the party with the PN and supplies to a villa equipped with refrigeration.
  - Consumer secured an English-speaking nurse from the American Hospital in Rome for port access, translation and other non-urgent medical needs.
  - Consumer has the name and location of the nearest hospital should a medical emergency arise.

STEP 5: Obtain PN Travel Vessel
An array of coolers are evaluated for durability and suitable dimensions. Two rolling coolers with large main compartments and retractable handles are purchased to transport the 35 liters of PN.

STEP 6: Testing...
After purchase, the coolers are repeatedly checked for construction, practicality and temperature control.

Mission Accomplished!
After eight days of travel, the care partner contacts the HNST and reports an amazing trip. As a result of the trip’s success, the consumer and care partner feel rejuvenated and better equipped to face the medical challenges ahead. The entire home care company experiences a sense of reward for a job well done.

On to our next challenge...