

Personalizing the Infusion Experience

By Heather Bremner Claverie



HOME, HOSPITAL, outpatient clinic or doctor's office? Today, patients receiving immune globulin (IG) infusions have a lot more choices, which is an improvement over the past when the only option was to receive infusions in a hospital or clinic setting. This changed in the 1980s when insurance companies began eyeing potential cost-cutting strategies, opening the doors to home-based infusions.

Convenience with Lower Costs

Driven by a desire to avoid the risk of healthcare-associated infections and to take advantage of the comfort and convenience of home, more patients are opting for home-based infusions. In addition, costs may be cut significantly with home-based infusions due to lower contracted reimbursement and fewer ancillary charges, making it an enticing option for insurance companies.

Safety in the Infusion Setting

Infusions can be safely administered in the home setting. However, being aware of different side effect profiles for subcutaneous IG (SCIG) and intravenous IG (IVIG) is important. Typically, SCIG causes fewer systemic side effects than IVIG.

SCIG patients are trained to become independent with administration, and once they have mastered the process,

they can continue to self-infuse unsupervised.

For patients receiving IVIG, the standard of care is to have a nurse administer each dose of IVIG and remain in the patient's home for the duration of the infusion.

Still, for some patients, a hospital or clinical setting is not simply a better option, it's the safest one. Hospital or clinic administration may be necessary for patients who have a history of significant reactions with IVIG doses. And, infusing in a hospital or clinic gives doctors and nurses the opportunity to interact with their patients more often, while also supervising and monitoring their health and response to treatment.

The Medicare Hurdle

But, reimbursement can pose challenges when it comes to IVIG vs. SCIG. Medicare Part B provides limited coverage for IVIG and SCIG in the home setting. While Part B covers many different types of conditions in the physician office or hospital infusion suite, coverage at home is limited to 24 primary immune deficiency diagnoses under the IVIG benefit, and there is no additional payment for a pump or supplies.

On the other hand, Medicare does provide coverage for the cost of the mechanical pump and associated supplies needed for SCIG therapy under the durable medical equipment benefit. Medicare also covers nursing services for SCIG patients with the 24 Part B-covered diagnoses while they are learning to become independent. Patients with diseases other than the 24 PI diagnoses may receive coverage under Medicare Part D; however, unless the patient has a Medicare Advantage plan, supplies and nursing services are not covered, which may prompt patients to receive therapy in hospitals or outpatient centers.

The Right Choice

Weighing the pros and cons of infusing in a doctor's office, clinic, hospital or home isn't as simple as deciding which setting is preferred. Cost, flexibility and safety are all factors that should be considered by patients and their doctors before settling on the right infusion environment. ■

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Uncomplicated Healthcare



The IDF ePHR is an electronic personal health record developed by the Immune Deficiency Foundation specifically for patients with a primary immuno-

deficiency disease. The system gives patients the power to track, store and share health information — all in one secure online program. Free; www.idfephr.org

Infuse Intelligence



The Ivenix Infusion System's smart pump uses advanced technology to enhance patient safety and improve infusion delivery. Its smartphone-like design encourages programming accuracy, while its automatic drug library and real-time dose guidance improves safety and drug compliance. Ivenix customers can take advantage of the included management system — a set of scalable tools, applications, analytics and dashboards that help healthcare providers manage infusion pumps and clinical information systems. Pricing varies; www.ivenix.com



Shopping Guide to Infusion Environments

Clean the Air

Maintaining a clean and healthy home is always important, but it's even more significant when that environment is the site of infusions. An air filter such as the Blueair Blue Pure 211+ can help filter out any mold spores, dust, pollen or viruses hanging out in the home, making both the air and the infusion environment safer. \$282.49; Amazon.com



Soften Up



All that hand washing can really wreak havoc on skin. 3M Cavilon Moisturizing Hand Lotion is a great solution for individuals who are frequently washing and sanitizing their hands. The lotion, which is compatible with chlorhexidine gluconate, will soothe and soften skin without breaking down latex gloves. It is fragrance free and hypoallergenic. \$15.10; Amazon.com



Just Relax

A comfy spot is a necessity when sitting for long periods during infusions, but any old chair won't suffice. Comfort, safety, convenience and cleanliness are all factors that the La Z Boy Tranquility Mobile Medical Recliner addresses. With easy-to-clean vinyl and a locking backrest option, patients can infuse in comfort. In addition, optional features such as side trays, IV poles, foot trays and set heaters are available. \$1,586; www.medicalresources.com/la-z-boy-leda-mobile-medical-recliner.html

Hug It Out



Weighted blankets are all the rage now for individuals dealing with everything from anxiety to insomnia. For infusion patients who may become anxious or nervous during their treatments or who have sleeping issues, weighted blankets may be a great option. Choose a blanket that's between 7 percent and 12 percent of your body weight for a feeling that proponents of this product say is akin to the feeling of a gentle hug. \$68.90 and up; Amazon.com