

METRO NEWS

Kidney Specialist Now a Patient

Reaching beside his chair, Carmine J. Caruso uses his free arm to pull a thick black folder into his lap. He flips through the familiar pages rapidly. The nurse, Eileen MacFarlene, RN, checks the circuit of the needles and the dialyzer, and helps him find the list he is looking for. Caruso glances over the sheet and rattles off strings of incomprehensible medical terms - titles of medical research papers he wrote during a 35-year stint in the Nephrology Lab at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Brooklyn.

Caruso is no stranger to the world of kidney disease and dialysis. The author of 21 published medical research papers, he retired in 1998 as the Chief of the Nephrology Lab at the VA Hospital in Brooklyn where he had worked most of his life. When Caruso was diagnosed with End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) in May last year, he immediately decided to find a reliable home dialysis training center and get started. "Spending three and a half decades in a nephrology lab had convinced me that home hemodialysis is the best chance for kidney disease patients," he adds emphatically.

At Satellite Healthcare's WellBound clinic in Mercer, Caruso found a helpful team of doctors, dietitians, nurses and patient care techs to provide comprehensive training and support. "Before I began dialyzing on my own at home, I had to learn how to insert tubes into my arm which make a circuit with the dialyzer to purify the blood. The team at WellBound was wonderful at training me to set up the dialyzer, monitor the dialysis, and deal with emergency situations," he says.

Home dialysis training has helped Caruso to overcome his disease and lead a normal life. "It is far easier to dialyze at home at my own schedule. In-center dialysis takes a physical and psychological toll. The five-week dial-

ysis training was essential not just to learn dialysis but also diet and exercise important to stay healthy with kidney disease," he says. Caruso requires dialysis six days a week for about 2 hrs. 20 min. a session. Between treatments, Caruso is an avid cyclist and often swims 60 laps in the community pool.

Ten years ago, Caruso was diagnosed with chronic kidney disease. "I knew that it was only a matter of time before dialysis became a regular part of my life," says the 80-year-old. In 2005 came another blow. His right kidney was removed when a tumor was discovered.

"Caruso is a man with the enthusiasm of a youth when it comes to setting up his dialysis machine. He enjoys going through the step-by-step process to dialyze himself. For him, it's like being back in the lab executing an experiment," says MacFarlene, the clinical manager at WellBound in Mercer.

Caruso dialyzes at home six times a week for about 2.5

hours everyday. Instead of letting dialysis disrupt his day, Caruso weaves it into his schedule, leaving him enough time and energy to do other things. "For a lot of kidney disease patients, dialysis is the end of the life they have known. It is important for us to stay on top of our own treatment, understand it and participate in it without letting the disease pull us down," says Caruso.



CARUSO keeps his nameplate from his days as Nephrology Lab Chief on the bathroom counter.



CARMINE CARUSO, 80, makes notes on a chart as he undergoes a dialysis treatment in his home in MonroeTwp., NJ.



CARMINE CARUSO requires dialysis treatment for about 2 hours, 20 minutes 6 days per week.



YOLANDA CARUSO shows off a favorite photo of her husband as a young sailor during WWII. The couple has been married for 49 years and are looking forward to their 50th.