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www.reachmd.com
info@reachmd.com
(866) 423-7849

Why PAH Centers of Excellence Are Important

Announcer:
You're listening to *Clinician's Roundtable* on ReachMD. Today, we'll hear from Dr. Ali Ataya, who is a Professor of Medicine in the University of Florida Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine, as well as the Director of the Pulmonary Hypertension Program and the HHT and Rare Lung Disease Program. He'll be discussing the importance of pulmonary arterial hypertension centers of excellence. Here's Dr. Ataya now.

Dr. Ataya:
A lot of patients have prolonged delays in between the time their symptoms start and when they get referred or diagnosed with PAH. So we are still dealing with delayed referrals from different specialists to experienced PAH centers of excellence.

And again, a lot of providers may have experience with PAH, but I think, truly, a Group 1 PAH patient should be referred and treated at an experienced PAH accredited center, because these are the centers that see a large volume of patients, have access to advanced therapies, and have the ability to enroll in clinical trials and registries. And it goes both ways. It's important for these centers, once a patient gets established with them, to keep an open communication with these doctors who are referring patients and specialists from the community in order to make sure that we don't have fragmented care for our PH patients.

And we have different screening tools for certain groups of patients that are high risk, like scleroderma. It's important to expand or improve on the way we screen for PAH in the larger community of at-risk patients. The good news is, a lot of these accredited centers have access to multidisciplinary specialists, like liver, congenital heart, pulmonary, cardiac, et cetera. So it is good that at these accredited centers, you're going to get access to all these specialists.

But unfortunately, some smaller centers that are not PH centers of excellence don't have that multidisciplinary approach. It kind of stresses the point that early referral is critical to help patients and improve their outcomes in the long term.

I think the best strategy is increasing awareness of PAH in order to facilitate early referral of patients suspected of having PAH to centers of excellence and accredited centers, in order to reach an accurate diagnosis, to categorize their PAH, to risk stratify them, to put them on appropriate therapies, or even to enroll them in clinical trials.

Another call to action in order to strengthen the care is having structured screening and building a shared care model between PAH centers of excellence and the community doctors who may be the first point of contact for these patients. And since COVID, we've learned that there's a lot we can do remotely for a lot of our patients, so perhaps strengthening our telehealth monitoring systems from PAH centers for patients who may have difficulty in accessing these centers of excellence or don't have the means in order to reach them. And finally, further improving education among the providers in this community.

Announcer:
You just heard Dr. Ali Ataya talking about why accredited centers for pulmonary arterial hypertension are so important. To access this and other episodes in our series, visit *Clinician's Roundtable* on ReachMD.com, where you can Be Part of the Knowledge. Thanks for listening!

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