

## Dialysis in the mountains

Kidney Center of the Rockies now open at Buck Creek Medical Plaza in Avon

By Laura Bell  
Special to the Daily

AVON — Kidney Center of the Rockies opened in January in the Buck Creek Medical Plaza in Avon, making Dr. Mike Anger's "decades-long vision" a reality.

The opening of the center has made dialysis treatments accessible for those living in Eagle, Summit, Garfield and Pitkin counties. The state-of-the-art facility is the only dialysis clinic in the mountain area.

"Until the center opened, there was no option for people needing dialysis anywhere in the mountains," Anger said. "Those people had to relocate."

Denver and Grand Junction were the closest options.

"If someone developed kidney failure while living in the area, it became onerous to drive. You can't really live in a location where there isn't dialysis," Anger said.

The lack of the clinic even prevented anyone needing dialysis from visiting the region for a few weeks at a time. The most common dialysis, hemodialysis, requires treatments three times a week for 3 ½ to four hours per session in a clinic. That does not include time spent preparing for and after the process.

"Many people would say, 'I'd love to spend a month in the Rockies in the summer, but I can't because there is nowhere I can go for dialysis.' Now patients can plan ski and summer vacations to the area," Anger said.

### MEETING A NEED

Anger is the chief medical officer of American Renal Associates, a corporation specializing in nephrology — the branch of medicine dedicated to physiology and diseases of the kidneys — and one of the largest dialysis services providers in the United States. He's also president of Western Nephrology, a Wheat Ridge-based practice that teamed with American Renal Associates to open Kidney Center of the Rockies.

Opening the facility was not an easy task, and now that it is up and running, there is still state certification that must be cleared



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**When looking for a site for the Kidney Center of the Rockies, American Renal Associates and Western Nephrology's wish list included ground-floor space, an adequate water supply, accessibility to the highway and a nice view for patients.**

by Medicare before the vast majority of patients can begin treatment at the facility.

"There has been talk of opening a clinic in the mountains for decades, but it was not easy to find a space that would work," said Anger, a part-time Avon resident.

Topping the wish list was a ground-floor space, an adequate water supply, accessibility to the highway and a nice view for patients. Typically, facilities are designed with treatment chairs facing each other, but Anger wanted to give patients a scenic view, comfortable chairs with therapeutic massage capability, screens with Wi-Fi — anything to make the procedure more user-friendly.

"I was looking for a space between East Vail and Edwards and had a lot of competition from the marijuana industry," Anger said.

### SUPPORT STAFF

In addition to Anger and his associates from Western Nephrology, there is a registered nurse, a patient-care technician, an engineer, a part-time social worker and a part-time dietician at the kidney center. The dietician and the social worker are part of American Renal Associates and visit the clinic twice a month.



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In addition to the in-clinic treatments, which, according to Anger, make up the majority of the treatments, there are two types of home treatment: peritoneal dialysis and nocturnal hemodialysis.

"Patients receive instruction on how to use the in-home treatments, one of which is overnight, and then come in twice a month to be monitored by the doctor," said center nurse Wanda Trudeau.

Not everyone, however, can do the home

### KIDNEY CENTER OF THE ROCKIES

**Location:** Buck Creek Medical Plaza, 50 Buck Creek Road in Avon, located just off Interstate 70 Exit 167 Beaver Creek/Avon  
**Hours:** 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**More information:** Call 970-949-3236, email [info@americanrenal.com](mailto:info@americanrenal.com), or click on "Clinics" at [americanrenalcolorado.com](http://americanrenalcolorado.com).

treatments; as Trudeau explained, patients need to be healthy for home treatment, as it takes a good deal of mobility. Those who elect home treatment have 24/7 support.

Additional support is offered by dietician Helen Doro, a Summit County resident who has "seen the hardships patients endure by traveling to Denver for treatment."

"Now that it is summer, there are a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables available that have potassium, which is important for most patients. Others have high potassium and it needs to be monitored," she said.

"The two biggest causes of kidney failure are hypertension (high blood pressure) and diabetes, which either is hereditary or can be caused by a poor diet."

The social worker at the clinic helps patients with everything from questions about insurance through Medicare to travel plans for those out-of-town visits to the clinic and transportation for those who are unable to drive.

"The entire staff is there to educate and encourage," Anger said.

### ADVANCES IN TREATMENT

The advances in dialysis have been nothing short of amazing, according to Anger. In the beginning, treatments were 12 hours per day, six to seven days a week. Home treatment was not an option, and there were no facilities as user friendly and accommodating as the Kidney Center of the Rockies, he said.

Before 1972, dialysis was only readily available for the very rich. In 1972, Medicare began covering dialysis, and today, anyone with any stage of any stage kidney disease is covered, Anger said.

The grand opening of the center, with an opportunity to tour the facility, will be held in July or August.

For more information on the Kidney Center of the Rockies and the upcoming open house this summer, visit [www.kidneycenteroftherockies.com](http://www.kidneycenteroftherockies.com) or call 970-949-3236.