

American Samoa's 1 dialysis clinic hopes to reopen Saturday (Update)

June 4 2015, by Fili Sagapolutele

A fresh supply of a dialysis product needed for the treatment of renal failure was expected to be delivered to American Samoa on Friday after a recall forced the only hospital on the island to stop treatments.

LBJ Medical Center CEO Taufete'e John Faumuina said hospital managers first learned of the recall of NaturaLyte Liquid Bicarbonate Concentrate from off-island supplier Fresenius Co. on Tuesday. They closed the clinic Wednesday morning, angering patients who showed up for their appointments only to discover a closure notice on the doors.

An emergency shipment of the product was scheduled to arrive Friday afternoon on a weekly cargo flight from Honolulu.

Dialysis unit nurse manager Olita Tafiti said the clinic will reopen at 1 a.m. Saturday and will stay open all weekend, with scheduled appointments resuming Monday. The hospital is hoping a Hawaiian Airlines flight from Honolulu on Monday will bring another shipment.

Until Saturday, there are no other options for dialysis patients on the U.S. territory about 2,300 miles south of Hawaii. American Samoa has a population of about 55,000.

Faumuina told lawmakers earlier this year that the clinic serves around 160 patients. During the closure, they are being told to follow diet and fluid restrictions, and to go to the hospital emergency room with any complications.

As of late Thursday morning, no one had checked into the ER because of health problems caused by the closure, according to emergency room nurses.

In an announcement on state-run television Wednesday night, Faumuina said the supplier requested the products be returned to the manufacturer, which was not identified.

"We have tried our best to check every unit (of the product) in our stock, but unfortunately every one of them falls under the category that has been cited to be returned," Faumuina said in the announcement.

At the clinic, a handful of elderly patients were upset that the closure notice was in English and not in their Samoan language. Patients had to ask hospital security guards for a Samoan translation.

The clinic also faces a shortage of dialysis machines and chairs, Faumuina has said.

A \$1.8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Interior is funding an expansion at the clinic, with an additional 16 dialysis stations set to be completed this month. The expansion will bring the total number of dialysis stations to 35, according to a recently released local government report.

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