Central venous catheters (CVCs) are used commonly for venous access during treatment, and catheter-related bloodstream infection (CRBSI) is a frequent, yet highly preventable, hospital-acquired infection. One of the performance elements of the Joint Commission’s 2012 National Patient Safety Goals addresses the education of patients and family members on CVC care and management, as well as CRBSI prevention before a central catheter is inserted. This article presents the history and roles of the Infusion Therapy Team at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in CVC care and describes an organized patient education program that plays a key part in the institution’s strategy to reduce and prevent CRBSI. Institutional standard policies and procedures for patient care should be in compliance with guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Joint Commission before any patient educational initiative is implemented. Such standards will serve as a guide to set up, organize, and implement an effective program.

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Background

The ITT of the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center is believed to be the first and longest continuously operating IV access team in the United States (Richardson & Caillouet, 2004). The clinic began in 1975, with the world’s first peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC) being placed by a nurse, Millie Lawson, RN. The team currently operates with 58 RNs, 2 licensed vocational nurses, 2 certified nursing assistants, 7 clerical support staff, 1 mid-level provider, and a surgical fellow rotating in the department on a daily basis. The unit is responsible for the management and care of percutaneous CVC and PICC insertions, over-wire catheter exchanges, and removal of implanted ports. Most of the catheters have dwell times ranging from months to years. For the MD Anderson Cancer Center, the longest continuous use is seven years for a silicone PICC and 10 years for a silicone subclavian CVC. The ITT clinic includes the implanted port clinic, which comprises a dedicated surgeon, physician assistants, an...