Before the United States had a licensed subcutaneous immune globulin (SCIG) product, the majority of people with primary immune deficiency disease (PIDD) were forced to schedule appointments with physicians, hospital clinics and homecare companies to receive intravenous immune globulin (IVIG) therapy from a nurse.

Since the Food and Drug Administration’s licensing of Vivaglobin, an SCIG made by Pennsylvania-based CSL Behring, many patients are able to consider self-administering their SCIG at home.

But with the freedom of in-home self-infusion comes the need for healthcare provider and patient training on this administration method—and the need is significant.

Specialty pharmacy NuFACTOR, a homecare services provider and sponsor of IG Living, regularly receives requests from patients and providers seeking SCIG training materials.

IG Living has also been contacted by patients who were referred to homecare and shipped the SCIG product and supplies, but were given no training or, in some cases, inadequate training.

One young woman who contacted IG Living was spending 30 to 60 minutes each day attempting to administer Vivaglobin into muscle, a painful experience, rather than into subcutaneous fatty tissue. Without any hands-on training, she received the product and supplies at her home, and she was expected to figure it out for herself.

Another patient reported being trained at an outpatient infusion clinic and taught to lie down while infusing. Consequently, the patient was experiencing a lot of pain during treatment.

It is dangerous to administer any medication without proper guidance from a healthcare professional, and inaccurate or inadequate SCIG training results, for many patients, in a failed experience with SCIG. They often return to intravenous infusions, disillusioned with the promised freedom and flexibility of self-administered SCIG.

This is where SCIG education and training programs come in, and, although the resources are few, there are some available.

CSL Behring’s training program, VITAL (Vivaglobin Integrated Training And Learning), was launched in April to educate patients and their healthcare providers about the proper methods for administering SCIG. The program focuses on at-home use of the product.

“We continually seek ways to ensure that consumers who use our products understand how best to use them. The VITAL program is an excellent example of that commitment,” said Robert Lefebvre, vice president and general manager of CSL Behring’s U.S. Commercial Operations.

The VITAL program provides physicians and nurses with guidance and a wide array of tools to help them educate their patients on SCIG administration. The program suggests that patients train with a nurse for several treatments before initiating their first independent treatment.

In addition to training materials for healthcare professionals, CSL Behring also provides patients with training tools for their own use, including a patient starter kit with an administration guide, information about the product and a treatment journal.

“One of CSL Behring’s most important goals is to extend professional support and know-how well beyond the point of bringing high-quality therapies to patients,” Lefebvre said.

NuFACTOR began developing its own SCIG training program before Vivaglobin was even available in the United States.

“We knew we were going to be a Vivaglobin provider,” explained Sean Hubbert at NuFACTOR, “and we knew we would assume responsibility for assuring the nurses we work with and our patients are well trained. So, we jumped on developing our own comprehensive training program. Now, in addition to CSL Behring’s training materials, we give our patients a training manual with a DVD of a patient demonstrating self-administration and we are enhancing our nurse training program. The combination of training the trainer and the patient will mean successful transition to SCIG for a lot more patients.”

Although SCIG is not for everyone, with proper training, it is providing the mobility and freedom many patients demand to keep up with their busy lives. To determine if SCIG is appropriate for you, please contact your healthcare provider.