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Dialysis funding critical to care

As a nurse who has cared for kidney disease patients, both pediatric and adult, for more than 20 years throughout central Pennsylvania, I must tell you of the growing numbers of Americans with kidney failure and their reliance on dialysis for survival. Most people don't realize that by circumstance or happenstance, they too, could one day find themselves dependent on dialysis treatment to stay alive.

November is Diabetes Awareness Month. More and more people (of all ages) are developing kidney failure because of diabetes, hypertension and obesity. It is crucial that we bring about awareness to the prevalence of kidney disease and the responsibility that we have, as fellow citizens, to ensure that the quality of medical care is adequate.

In my many years of nursing, the cost of caring for patients has tripled. The technology to care for my patients has improved dramatically, allowing people to survive medical conditions they once would have surely died from having. But changes in Medicare reimbursement have not kept up with these other improvements. Caregivers such as myself will always continue to provide the best possible care, but we need enough funding for the resources to do so. Most important is the education of at-risk patients and quality dialysis care for Pennsylvania residents with kidney disease.

"The Kidney Care and Quality Improvement Act" would ensure adequate funding for quality dialysis care and money for education and awareness programs to help delay or avoid the onset of kidney failure. This bipartisan legislation is the kidney community's best hope for improving . Thanks to Sen. Rick Santorum for being the chief champion of this legislation.

-- ELLEN COOK, RN, Mount Carmel

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