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**Kidney Care Partners Applauds House and Senate Leaders for Introducing the
Kidney Care Quality and Education Act**

– Legislation addresses sharp anticipated growth of kidney disease and failure; One in nine Americans suffers from kidney disease and 400,000 depend on quality dialysis care –

WASHINGTON (February 27, 2007) – With the number of Americans experiencing chronic kidney disease (CKD) and end-stage renal disease (ESRD) rising rapidly, members of the national kidney care community today expressed their deep gratitude to members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives for introducing legislation that would initiate long-needed education and prevention programs, launch a quality improvement initiative, and establish a method to evaluate key payment policy reforms.

Kidney Care Partners – an alliance of patient advocates, dialysis professionals, care providers and manufacturers working together to improve quality of care for individuals with Chronic Kidney Disease – proudly supports the Kidney Care Quality and Education Act of 2007, introduced today by Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND) and Representatives Dave Camp (R-MI) and John Lewis (D-GA). The Act establishes patient education and disease management programs to inform patients about how to identify and manage kidney disease and how to prevent kidney failure. The legislation also establishes a three-year Continuous Quality Improvement Initiative that would reward quality improvements based on measures developed in cooperation with the kidney care community and that would link a three-year update to clinical performance. Dialysis providers, unlike all other Medicare providers, do not have an automatic mechanism to update payments based on inflation. Adequate and stable reimbursement is critical to ensuring patient access to high-quality care.

“As physicians, nurses, dialysis providers, researchers, educators and a community as a whole, it’s our responsibility to address a very evident national health crisis,” said Edward Jones, M.D., Chairman of Kidney Care Partners. “By taking this essential first step, policymakers are

helping to ensure that we can effectively care for Americans who need our help, as well as give them the tools they need to help themselves.”

Each year, more than 100,000 Americans are diagnosed with End Stage Renal Disease and require dialysis or a kidney transplant in order to survive. Today, more than 400,000 patients in the United States are living with kidney failure, and that number is expected to double in the next decade due to a dramatic rise in diabetes — the number one cause of kidney disease — as well as high blood pressure. Twenty million other Americans – or one in nine – have some form of kidney disease and are at risk of developing kidney failure absent some form of disease management education or preventative care.

"The Kidney Care Quality and Education Act goes a long way to improve how we manage kidney disease. Educating patients to better manage their kidney disease makes good health sense and good financial sense," Senator Conrad said. "For people who do need dialysis, the Kidney Care Quality and Education Act ensures they will have access to the best quality care we can provide."

The Kidney Care Quality and Education Act – S. 691 in the Senate – builds upon the previously introduced Kidney Care Quality and Improvement Act from the 109th Congress.

Please visit the new
Kidney Care Partners Web site:

www.kidneycarepartners.org



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High blood pressure and diabetes
two leading risk factors of kidney failure



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Kidney Care Partners is a Coalition of patient advocates, dialysis professionals, care providers and suppliers working together to improve quality of care for individuals with Chronic Kidney Disease.

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PATIENT EXPERIENCES



DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PATIENT

At 3:00 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, Valerie Harris-Fields waits for the first shift of her children to walk through the front door. Over the next half hour seven of her eight



About Kidney Care Partners

Kidney Care Partners was founded in May of 2003, as a Coalition of patient advocates, dialysis professionals, care providers and manufacturers dedicated to working together to improve quality of care for individuals with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD).

Mission Statement

Members of the kidney care community have formed an alliance – Kidney Care Partners. Their goal is to involve patient advocates, care professionals, providers and manufacturers. Their mission, individually and collectively, is to ensure:

- Chronic kidney disease patients receive optimal care;
- Chronic kidney disease patients are able to live quality lives;
- Dialysis care is readily accessible to all those in need; and
- Research and development leads to enhanced therapies and innovative products.

Coalition Members

Abbott Laboratories
American Kidney Fund
American Nephrology Nurses'
Association
American Regent, Inc.
American Renal Associates, Inc.
American Society of Nephrology
American Society of Pediatric
Nephrology
Amgen
Baxter Healthcare Corporation
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DaVita, Inc.
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Fresenius Medical Care North America
Genzyme
Medical Education Institute
National Kidney Foundation
National Renal Administrators
Association
Northwest Kidney Centers
Renal Advantage Inc.
Renal Physician's Association
Renal Support Network
Satellite Health Care
U.S. Renal Care
Watson Pharma, Inc.



KIDNEY CARE QUALITY AND EDUCATION ACT OF 2007

Congress should ensure high quality kidney care and provide more education about kidney disease by:

- ❖ Creating public and patient education initiatives to increase awareness about chronic kidney disease (CKD) and to help patients learn self-management skills that prevent and control CKD;
- ❖ Establishing a three-year Continuous Quality Improvement Initiative that would reward quality improvement and attainment;
- ❖ Providing educational sessions for Medicare beneficiaries with Stage IV CKD to teach them how to slow the progression of the disease;
- ❖ Establishing a uniform training for patient care dialysis technicians; and
- ❖ Seeking to understand the barriers to the adoption of different treatment modalities by patients.

This legislation would build upon the “Kidney Care Quality and Improvement Act of 2005” introduced during the 109th Congress.

BACKGROUND

Four hundred thousand Americans have irreversible kidney failure. Kidney failure is fatal unless a patient receives one of two types of treatment – dialysis or kidney transplantation. Transplantation is limited due to the shortage of donor organs, so the vast majority of patients undergo regular dialysis treatments of three to four hours duration, three times a week. Today’s patients are older and sicker than those first enrolled in the Medicare End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) program, due primarily to the aging of the population and the long-term effects of diabetes and hypertension.

In 1972, Congress committed to provide Americans with kidney failure with coverage for their lifesaving therapy through the Medicare program. In 1983, Congress implemented the first Medicare Prospective Payment System (PPS), known as the “composite rate”, for reimbursing dialysis providers. Medicare’s ESRD program continues to play a vital role in ensuring access to high quality, lifesaving therapy for those patients with kidney failure. Better care for patients leads to better quality of life, improved rehabilitation, fewer medications, and fewer hospitalizations.

QUALITY AND EDUCATION

Congress should establish educational programs for those at risk of developing kidney disease. Educational programs about kidney disease would provide information about the factors that lead to kidney failure, such as obesity, diabetes, and hypertension, how to prevent them, how to treat them, and how to avoid kidney failure. Education programs for those with progressive kidney disease would also enable affected individuals to actively participate in their choice of therapy and to understand how to manage their disease, thereby reducing associated costs.

Congress should establish a three-year Continuous Quality Improvement Initiative for the Medicare ESRD Program to assure that payments support high quality care. The quality of dialysis care remains high; however, there is room for improvement. Both MedPAC and the kidney care community agree that the community is well positioned among Medicare providers to participate in a quality program that recognizes providers for their performance. Facilities, providers, and physicians should report quality data, based upon clinical and quality of life measures developed in consultation with the kidney care community and receive quality bonus payments based upon the attainment of benchmarks and maintenance of outcomes. Bonus payments should be drawn from a portion of an annual update. Because the ESRD composite rate is the only Medicare PPS without an annual update mechanism to adjust for changes in input prices and inflation, Congress should provide an update to dialysis facilities for the duration of the Continuous Quality Improvement Initiative, thereby, linking an annual update to clinical performance.

Congress should assist patients by improving ESRD patient coverage. According to U.S. Renal Data System, the percentage of ESRD patients relying on home dialysis and other treatment modalities has steadily declined. Yet, home dialysis can improve patients’ quality of life by allowing them to remain employed and to participate in other activities that promote well-being. Congress should learn more about the barriers these patients face and how to remove them.



Kidney Care Partners – Making a **REAL** Difference in Patients' Lives

More than 400,000 Americans of all ages suffer from kidney failure, (or End Stage Renal Disease) – an irreversible condition which is fatal without a kidney transplant or lifesaving dialysis treatments. More than 100,000 new patients are diagnosed each year, many as the result of conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes. An additional 20 million Americans – or 1 in 9 adults – suffer from Chronic Kidney Disease, which untreated, can progress to kidney failure.

Slowing this trend in coming years is dependent on prevention, education and disease management.

Kidney Care Partners – an alliance of patient advocates, dialysis professionals, providers and manufacturers – are working together to raise awareness and improve the quality of care for individuals with kidney failure. That's why Kidney Care Partners supports the **Kidney Care Quality & Education Act**, bipartisan legislation co-sponsored by Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND) and Representatives John Lewis (D-GA) and Dave Camp (R-MI), which would:

- Create public and patient education initiatives to increase awareness about chronic kidney disease (CKD) to help patients learn self management skills.
- Establish a three-year Continuous Quality Improvement Initiative that would reward quality improvements based on measures developed in cooperation with the kidney care community and that would link a three-year update to clinical performance.



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**SUPPORT THE KIDNEY CARE
QUALITY AND EDUCATION ACT.
IMPROVING QUALITY, SAVING LIVES.**