



Statement by Kidney Care Partners

Medicare's End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Program is one of our nation's greatest health care success stories, ensuring the delivery of more than 50 million life-saving treatments to 400,000 patients each year, and doing so with unparalleled access, transparency and demonstrably high quality of care. Your story fails to give a full picture of kidney care in America and the progress that has been made.

Kidney Care Partners (KCP) -- a broad-based coalition of kidney physicians, nurses, providers, patients, researchers and manufacturers -- and the government agencies responsible for management and oversight of the Medicare ESRD benefit share the common goals of providing access to dialysis care to every American with kidney failure, regardless of age, income or other health conditions, while also achieving sustained, measurable quality improvements. Together, these goals are being met, and in many cases, exceeded.

Recent government data prove this point: Quality has been maintained or improved in 9 out of 11 key clinical areas. In fact, the quality of kidney care in America continues on an upward trajectory in key areas, including maintaining adequate blood levels, removing toxins from the body, vaccinating patients to prevent infectious diseases, and achieving target levels of phosphorous and calcium in the body. These positive trends stem from improvements in care plan protocols and clinical best practices, advances in medicines and biologics, innovations in new dialysis technologies and offerings, and programs to increase fistula usage over catheters. Importantly, the United States is a world leader in the rate of kidney transplants we perform every year.

Indicative of its leadership in the area of quality improvement, the kidney community, through KCP, developed several quality performance measures in a multi-year initiative launched in 2005. The measures, which have been endorsed by the National Quality Forum, will contribute to advances in dialysis quality measurement and reporting, and ultimately improve patient outcomes. In a follow-on initiative, KCP launched the Performance Excellence and Accountability in Kidney Care (PEAK) Campaign, with the singular goal of improving survival rates in patients during their first year of dialysis. PEAK aims to reduce first year mortality by 20 percent by the end of 2012. The first year on dialysis is a critical time for stabilizing a patient following kidney failure, as it is a time when patients experience significant medical, physical, logistical and emotional challenges.

Congress also has taken steps to improve Medicare's kidney care benefit. In recent years, Congress passed bipartisan legislation to make available patient education programs to increase awareness about chronic kidney disease and to teach patients self-management skills that help prevent further disease progression. Congress also has made significant changes in the way Medicare funds the dialysis benefit, including establishment of the first true value-based purchasing program. Starting in 2012, Medicare will link payment to performance in kidney care. Providers who fail to meet government-established quality standards will be penalized with a funding cut of up to 2 percent. Dialysis providers are the first of any health care sector to operate under a value-based purchasing model.

Without question, our nation's health care system must face the challenging question of how to stem the tide of obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure, which are precursors of chronic kidney disease. One answer is creating a reliable system for early detection and treatment. The fact that only 40 percent of new dialysis patients have seen a nephrologist before starting dialysis illustrates the significance – and importance – of the challenge before us.

In summary, the kidney care community in America provides high quality care and is committed to continually improving care quality. We look forward to working in partnership with all stakeholders in kidney care to continue advancing positive trends in patient outcomes and improved survival rates, kidney transplant rates, and the overall dialysis experience.

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).

KCP's 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.*