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AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEPHROLOGY WELCOMES GAO REPORT CONFIRMING URGENT NEED FOR GREATER RESEARCH FUNDING

[Report Details Imbalance between Kidney Disease Research and Health Impact](#)

[ASN Pledges \\$7 Million to Prize Competition for Innovative Therapy](#)

Washington, DC (January 18, 2017) — With kidney diseases at historic levels in the United States and too few new therapies in decades, the findings in a Government Accountability Office (GAO) [report](#) released today, *National Institutes of Health: Kidney Disease Research Funding and Priority Setting*, point to the inadequacies of federally funded medical research for kidney diseases in the face of a staggering burden on patients and taxpayers.

Medicare covers every American suffering from kidney failure—regardless of age—and guarantees them access to lifesaving dialysis or kidney transplants through the End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Program. Kidney failure is the only condition covered by Medicare for patients under 65 years of age. More than 20 million Americans have kidney diseases and more than 650,000 have kidney failure.

Despite this commitment to care for patients with kidney diseases, the report demonstrates a significant gap between investment in research and the disease burden. Annually, the federal government spends more on the Medicare ESRD program (nearly \$32 billion) than it invests in the entire National Institutes of Health (NIH) budget (\$30 billion). With just \$564 million dedicated to kidney disease research at NIH, ASN analysis of the report reveals that the equivalent of 1.7% of the annual total cost of care for kidney failure is invested in research to improve therapies and discover cures.

“Kidney diseases are devastating the lives of millions of Americans,” said Eleanor Lederer, MD, FASN, President, ASN. “Innovation has not kept pace with the magnitude of the diseases and the current underinvestment in kidney research is detrimental to patients and taxpayers. Today’s GAO report highlights the extent of the gap between our investment in innovation to treat and cure kidney diseases and the outsized burden they place on every American.”

ASN announced at a White House Organ Summit last year its pledge of the first \$7 million to launch a prize competition incentivizing the development of novel technologies for renal replacement therapy to improve quality of life for patients with kidney diseases. The society has also pledged to work with Congress to ensure the United States' investment in research to cure kidney diseases is adequate to meet the challenge it poses to patients and taxpayers.

“Despite the federal government’s commitment to care for patients with kidney failure, for decades we have seen too few new therapies for kidney patients,” said Crystal Gadegbeku, MD, Chair of the ASN Policy and Advocacy Committee. “Today’s report strengthens ASN’s resolve to foster innovation that improves patients’ lives and extends the value to the Medicare program that has saved so many lives.”

“ASN is calling on both the public and private sectors to join us in shaping the future to improve patient outcomes and change the economic dynamics of kidney disease in this country,” added Dr. Gadegbeku. “This goal will require innovative approaches such as the prize competition and greater resources for kidney research.”

ASN commends the members of Congress who requested this GAO report—Congressional Kidney Caucus co-chair Rep. Tom Marino (PA-10), Rep. Barbara Comstock (VA-10), House Science Committee Chairman Rep. Lamar Smith (TX-21), Sen. Ben Cardin (MD), and Sen. Bill Nelson (FL) —for their commitment to better understanding our nation’s efforts to provide care and develop innovative therapies and cures for the millions of Americans with kidney diseases. The society looks forward to working with these dedicated lawmakers to improve the lives of kidney patients nationwide.

Since 1966, ASN has been leading the fight to prevent, treat and cure kidney diseases throughout the world by educating health professionals and scientists, advancing research and innovation, communicating new knowledge, and advocating for the highest quality care for patients. ASN has nearly 17,000 members representing 112 countries. For more information, please visit www.asn-online.org or contact the society at 202-640-4660.

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