



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 1, 2013

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Nation's Kidney Care Leaders Express Alarm Over Depth of CMS-Proposed Cuts in Medicare Funding for Dialysis

*Largest Renal Coalition Urges Medicare Agency to Work With Community to 'Get It Right' to
Protect Americans with Kidney Failure*

Washington, DC—The nation's leading kidney care coalition expressed alarm over the depth of cuts contained in the just issued Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) proposed rule affecting Medicare funding for life-sustaining dialysis treatments.

Kidney Care Partners (KCP) Chairman Ron Kuerbitz urged health care policymakers to "proceed with caution" as they consider adjustments to Medicare's end-stage renal disease (ESRD) program. "People with kidney failure are among our most vulnerable Medicare beneficiaries," said Kuerbitz. "Proposed cuts of this magnitude simply go too far. We are deeply concerned about the implications for dialysis patients and the sustainability of the Medicare ESRD system, especially in rural and inner city areas. For that reason, it is crucial for CMS to get it right as they consider adjustments to the system."

Medicare's ESRD benefit covers dialysis care for approximately 85 percent of the 400,000 Americans living with kidney failure. These individuals rely on dialysis to live. As the nation's broad-based coalition of patients, physicians, nurses, technicians, providers, and manufacturers, KCP believes these cuts could jeopardize both quality of and access to life-sustaining dialysis treatments.

"Dialysis providers are struggling to absorb and adjust to the Medicare cuts made to the program in recent years," said Kuerbitz. "As government data clearly show, Medicare barely covers the cost of providing dialysis to ESRD patients, even before the impact of sequestration-related cuts. The current proposal would dramatically underfund this crucial therapy for Medicare beneficiaries on dialysis. To protect the well-being of our patients, CMS must moderate its approach to this rule."

The CMS proposal comes on the heels of numerous bi-partisan appeals from lawmakers to take a cautious approach to implementing ATRA's (American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012) ESRD provisions. Just last month, 17 bi-partisan Senators sent a [letter](#) to CMS urging officials to make payment adjustments "in a manner that does not gut this crucial service for vulnerable beneficiaries." Similar letters were sent by the [House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee Committee Chairman and Ranking Member](#) as well as the three [Congressional minority caucuses](#).

In addition, four of the nation's leading kidney patient advocacy organizations – the National Kidney Foundation, the American Kidney Fund, Dialysis Patient Citizens, and Renal Support Network – [joined together](#) to urge CMS to be cautious in its rulemaking.

“The final rule will have a significant impact on kidney care,” said Kuerbitz. “KCP has every intention of working constructively with CMS to find a way to fine tune the Medicare ESRD payment system without reversing the great strides we’ve made as a community in areas of measurable quality improvements and patient access.”

Kidney Care Partners is a community-wide coalition of patient advocates, dialysis professionals, researchers, care providers and manufacturers dedicated to working together to improve quality of care for individuals with chronic kidney disease.

To learn more, visit www.kidneycarepartners.com.

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