



ANNA Supports Legislation to Assist Kidney Transplant Patients
The Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act
(H.R. 5534 and S. 3353)

The American Nephrology Nurses Association (ANNA) is a nonprofit organization with a membership of over 8,500 registered nurses and other health care professionals at all levels of practice. ANNA members work in settings such as chronic kidney disease management, peritoneal dialysis, hemodialysis, continuous renal replacement therapy, transplantation, industry, and government/regulatory agencies.

Background on Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage

In the United States, 37 million adults are estimated to have chronic kidney disease (CKD) – and most aren't aware of it. One in three American adults is at risk for CKD. Risk factors for kidney disease include diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a family history of kidney failure, and being age 60 or older.

Roughly 750,000 Americans have ESRD and need dialysis or a kidney transplant to survive. More than 500,000 of these patients receive dialysis, according to NIDDK, and nearly 100,000 Americans are on the waitlist for a kidney transplant. The average wait time for a kidney transplant can be upwards of three to seven years. Each year, Medicare spends approximately \$89,000 per dialysis patient and less than half, \$26,000, for a transplant patient, according to the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission.

Medicare's coverage of immunosuppressive drugs ends 36 months after a kidney transplant. Many patients lack affordable coverage when their Medicare coverage ends and are forced go without their medications. This legislation will extend Medicare coverage to immunosuppressive drugs only for recipients who lack private or other public coverage. Correcting the current immunosuppressive coverage policy will save lives and reduce the unnecessary costs to Medicare of returning these patients to dialysis and/or re-transplanting patients.

In fact, a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation study found that extending the coverage would result in an accumulated savings of approximately \$73 million over ten years. A report from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Office of the Actuary, shows an even greater savings, \$300 million over ten years.

Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act

The *Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act* (H.R. 5534 and S. 3353), would extend coverage of immunosuppressive drugs for kidney transplant recipients beyond the current limit when the individual has no other coverage. Currently, patients lose their immunosuppressive drug coverage 36 months after a transplant. This can lead to patients not being able to afford their medications and increase the risk of organ rejection. H.R. 5534 and S. 3353 would permanently remove the 36-month limit.

Recommendation: ANNA urges Members of Congress to cosponsor H.R. 5534 and S. 3353, the *Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act*.