Dialysis Patients Advocate to Congress and CMS

Last week, DaVita Patient Citizens (DPC), a nationwide nonprofit organization led by current dialysis patients, visited Washington DC to advocate on behalf of patients. A dozen patient leaders called on 28 Congressional offices and 11 representatives of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the agency that administers the Medicare program.

The focus of the Hill visit was to seek support for the Kidney Care Quality Improvement Act of 2005 (HR 1298, S 635).

Congressman Rick Boucher (D-VA), a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, agreed to cosign immediately. "I am pleased to be a co-author of H.R. 1298, the Kidney Care Quality Improvement Act, which would improve access to health care, funding and prevention resources for those who suffer from chronic kidney ailments," Boucher said.

The patients also discussed the bill with other Congress members from Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Oklahoma, New York, Texas and Virginia.

At the CMS meeting, the agency representatives indicated approval of DPC's goals. They encouraged DPC to partner with various CMS groups to stay apprised of CMS activities and ensure the dialysis patient perspective is represented.

DPC Board President Cathy Bridges, a dialysis patient from Sacramento, said, "This trip is a milestone for DPC. I feel like we are making real progress in our mission to advocate for dialysis patients."

The Kidney Care Quality Improvement Act would help the 20 million Americans with kidney disease, as well as over 300,000 with kidney failure who require dialysis treatments to live. The legislation seeks to reform the current End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) program to provide for pre-ESRD education and counseling; improve access to care for patients living in rural areas; and promote improved vascular access. It would also put in place an annual update system, so the Medicare payments for dialysis are adjusted each year for inflation and rising costs.

DPC is the largest dialysis patient organization in America. It is a nationwide nonprofit dialysis patient organization, led by current dialysis patients, dedicated to improving dialysis patients' quality of life through education and advocacy. Membership is open to all pre-dialysis patients, dialysis patients and their family members across the country. As of September, DPC had over 9,000 members, almost all of whom are current dialysis patients. For more information, visit DPC's website at www.dialysispatients.org.

SOURCE: DaVita Patient Citizens

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Web site: http://www.dialysispatients.org/

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