



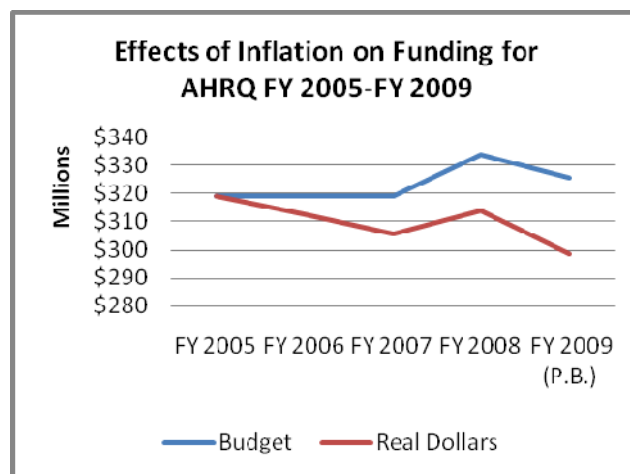
ASN Urges Congress to Prioritize Health Services Research, Increase AHRQ Budget in FY 2009

The American Society of Nephrology (ASN) recommends increased attention, dedication, and funding for health services research in fiscal year (FY) 2009. Health services research, or the examination of “how people get access to health care, how much care costs, and what happens to patients as a result of this care¹,” is primarily funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). For FY 2009, President George W. Bush has proposed cutting the agency’s budget and ability to address vital health care needs via cost effectiveness, patient safety, and quality care research. **ASN recommends funding the agency at \$360 million in FY 2009, a \$25.4 million increase over FY 2008 and a \$34.3 million increase over the President’s request.**

If enacted, President Bush’s funding request would eliminate all new non-patient safety contracts and interagency agreements as well as new general patient safety grants, essentially halting new investigation in the health services arena. Funding restrictions in the past few years have also severely diminished support for career development awards. These grants are directed at assisting new faculty in the transition from junior to established investigator; without such dedicated support, the pipeline for health services researchers will be severely constricted.

Without appropriate funding, AHRQ will also be forced to restrict efforts in health information technology, including directives to effectively implement electronic medical records, electronic prescribing, and hand-held device usage. Flat funding for comparative effectiveness research will diminish the agency’s ability to assess the value and benefit of various health interventions for the general public as well as for unique patient populations.

Recognizing the pervasive disparities in health care treatment and outcomes for underrepresented minority populations—particularly those with chronic kidney disease—ASN encourages appropriate funding for AHRQ’s disparities research portfolio. African Americans with chronic kidney disease are four times more likely to progress to end stage renal disease than Caucasians, and Hispanics are twice as likely to progress.



*Inflation based on CPI

The Friends of AHRQ supports increased funding so the agency “can continue and restore its critical health care safety, quality, and efficiency initiatives; strengthen the infrastructure of the research field; and reignite innovation and discovery.” Due to years of flat funding and insufficient budgets, the agency will have lost \$20 million in purchasing power since FY 2005, if the President’s budget is enacted.

ASN is a not-for-profit organization of 11,000 physicians and scientists dedicated to the study of nephrology and committed to providing a forum for the promulgation of information regarding the latest research and clinical findings on kidney diseases. ASN is a member of the Friends of AHRQ, a voluntary coalition of more than **130 organizations**.

¹ *Helping the Nation With Health Services Research*. Fact Sheet. AHRQ Publication No. 02-P014, March 2002. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. <http://www.ahrq.gov/news/focus/scenarios.htm>