

Kidney Disease: A Growing Public Health and Economic Concern

Approximately 26 million Americans have some evidence of chronic kidney disease, which may eventually lead to kidney failure.

The Increasing Health & Economic Burden of Kidney Disease

- Approximately 26 million Americans have some evidence of chronic kidney disease and are at risk to develop kidney failure.
 - Another 20 million are at increased risk for developing kidney disease.
- The number of people diagnosed with kidney disease has doubled during each of the last two decades.
 - Although it can occur at any age, older Americans are at higher risk. As the baby-boomers enter their 60s and 70s, the number of Americans with kidney disease is expected to increase significantly.
- When chronic kidney disease progresses, it may lead to kidney failure or end stage renal disease (ESRD).
 - Currently, approximately 485,000 Americans have been diagnosed with kidney failure and require ongoing, expensive and life-altering treatments – such as frequent dialysis treatments or kidney transplantation – to stay alive.
- The annual cost of treating ESRD is currently over \$32 billion.
 - The number of Americans with this advanced stage of the disease is expected to grow to 785,000 by 2020.
- The annual costs to treat kidney disease are more than one quarter (27.6 percent) of Medicare’s expenditures, and this will increase in the years to come.
 - While the expenditures are significant, many patients do not receive all of the treatment they need because of reimbursement system flaws:
 - Medicare does not fully cover all cost of dialysis treatments.
 - Life-sustaining immunosuppressant drugs for kidney transplant patients are only covered for three years.
- Acute kidney injury is diagnosed in over 300,000 Americans each year, and is associated with increased death rates and health care costs, and may accelerate progression to ESRD.

More Research & Information about Kidney Disease is Needed

- Primary care physicians and nephrologists need evidence-based guidelines to effectively treat early stage kidney disease and to help prevent its progression.
- Government guidance is needed on tracking data based on patient race and ethnicity in order to quantify the considerable racial disparities in kidney disease incidence, and ensure that appropriate measures are designed.
- Federally funded medical research is needed to help physicians learn more about the best treatment for kidney disease.