

Chronic Kidney Disease Initiative

ASN is pleased to announce the launch of the Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) Initiative. This initiative is designed to provide information on the key issues of CKD to generalists practicing in the United States. To this end, ASN will present symposia at three or more national meetings of physicians in 2006.

The first session was a two-hour symposium presented at the annual meeting of the American College of Osteopathic Family Practitioners, scheduled at the Gaylord Texan Resort in Gaylord, Texas, on March 24, 2006. There is another session scheduled as a three-hour symposium, which will be held at the annual convention of the American College of Osteopathic Internists later this year. Each of these meetings draws 2000 to 3000 attendees. The selected faculty will be divided equally between ASN and the American Osteopathic Association (AOA). Faculty members identified by ASN include Jonathan Himmelfarb and Mark Sarnak; AOA faculty members include Nelson Kopyt and Stuart Sprague.

A third session was also held in coordination with the American College of Physicians (ACP) at their April 2006 Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. The session entitled, "CKD: The New Silent Killer," featured ASN faculty members Drs. Himmelfarb, Sprague, Parfrey, and Sarnak. Drs. Robert Narins and Derek Latos acted as Co-Chairs at a meeting that typically draws between 5000 and 6000 registrants. More to come!

ASN International Meetings

ASN's Renal Week is the preeminent nephrology meeting in the world and now, in addition to Renal Week, Renal Week Highlights Meetings, and the Board Review Course, ASN has been invited by local nephrology societies on other continents to develop "Highlights" meetings to be presented in Europe and South America. The first such meeting, held in January in Berlin, drew more than TWICE the expected number of participants. Similar local "Highlights" meetings are under development in Brazil and Barcelona, Spain. Details to follow!

Policy and Public Affairs Update

Senate Approves Budget Resolution—Specter–Harkin Amendment Restores Labor–Health and Human Services Funding

The United States Senate approved its budget resolution for the fiscal year (FY) 2007. In a narrow 51 to 49 vote, the Senate approved the FY 2007 budget resolution after Republican leaders reached a deal to provide a steady stream of dedicated money for reconstruction and recovery efforts for the Gulf Coast.

An important part of the Senate's budget resolution is the Specter–Harkin amendment, which boosts discretionary spending levels for health, education, and human services programs. The Senate voted 73 to 27 to approve the Specter–Harkin amendment, which adds an additional \$7 billion to these programs.

Health and Education programs are in danger under the President's proposed FY 2007 budget, which would slash \$4.2 billion from the FY 2006 Labor–Health and Human Services (HHS) bill and is \$7 billion below the level in the FY 2005 bill. For example, the President's budget would cut funding for 18 of the 19 institutes at National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The Specter–Harkin amendment restores those cuts by providing an additional \$7 billion over the President's budget request—allowing Congress to fund the FY 2007 Labor–HHS bill at the level enacted two years ago in FY 2005.

ASN members joined with other biomedical research advocates to show a prompt outpouring of support for the Specter–Harkin Amendment. ASN values the commitment of several hundred members who contacted their Senators and advocated for the Amendment. Health funding advocate is now focused on the House of Representatives as they consider the Senate's FY 2007 budget proposal.

ASN Commitment to Public Policy

We are at an exciting juncture as an organization and as a leader within the renal community. There are significant initiatives, including more vigorous advocacy for healthcare policy and research funding, that can help improve funding for the future of medical research, speed the translation of new advances to the practice of nephrology, enhance the education of primary care physicians in the recognition and treatment of nascent kidney disease, and improve the quality of life for our patients. The goal for ASN is that we must be prepared to confront these issues, while, at the same time, maintaining our dedication as a Society to scientific excellence and advancement of new knowledge.

Public Policy Board

The ASN Council is pleased to announce that the newly established ASN Policy Board is fully constituted and engaged. ASN is fortunate to have such a talented group of leaders who have collective expertise in all the important facets of public health related to kidney disease as members of the Board. The Policy Board will be chaired by Jonathan Himmelfarb, MD, and members will include: Donald Wesson, MD; Brian Pereira, MD; Norman Siegel, MD; Connie Davis, MD; and Eric Neilson, MD.

The Policy Board mission is to develop and build a platform for ASN in the public health arena related to the importance and consequences of kidney disease. The Board will be guided by three principles: (1) assist on a policy level to assure the best possible medical care for patients with kidney disease; (2) support the practice and profession of nephrology in a time of change; and (3) advocate for resources to support kidney disease research.

The arenas for Board activity include CKD (including the roles that diabetes mellitus, hypertension, anemia, and other factors play in progression), ESRD (including dialysis and transplantation as therapeutic modalities), acute kidney injury (especially with new data emerging on the increasing prevalence of hospital-acquired acute kidney injury and recognition of the consequences associated with small changes in GFR), and broad-based research advocacy. The Board will be structured to receive input from a variety of ASN 's advisory groups, committees, and other stakeholders. The ASN Council is committed to work closely with the new Policy Board and to provide the necessary resources and internal organizational support to act quickly and decisively on important public policy issues on behalf of our members.

Clinical Research Meeting

ASN, in partnership with National Kidney Foundation and Renal Physicians Association, sponsored a consensus conference in March 2006 to develop and define the parameters that will guide clinical research in patients on dialysis and with CKD over the next decade. The consensus conference agenda focused on issues related to patient access, reimbursement for research, regulatory barriers, and overall guidelines that should govern the conduct of research in these patients whether initiated by industry, the dialysis providers, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), or individual investigators. To facilitate such a process, the sponsoring organizations invited renal community stakeholders including NIDDK, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Kidney Care Partners, and industry to participate. ASN believes that the outcome of this meeting will result in facilitating the conduct of research in the kidney disease patient population with the ultimate goal of best serving their interests. These patients, perhaps more than others, are likely to benefit from interventions designed to improve survival rates and quality of life. Conference participants intend to develop an outline of guiding principles and a template for a (legal) Master Agreement to deal with this important area of research.