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TOP NIH KIDNEY RESEARCH DIRECTOR WINS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FROM AMERICA'S PREMIER KIDNEY PATIENT GROUP

Dr. Griffin P. Rodgers Wins President's Award from the American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP)

Washington, D.C.: Today, the American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP), the nation's oldest and largest independent kidney patient organization and a global champion for patient care choice and treatment innovation, announced a 2021 honoree of its prestigious National President's Award – Griffin P. Rodgers, MD, MACP, Director for the National Institute of Diabetes, Digestive, and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Dr. Rodgers was selected for his courage and leadership during the national COVID-19 pandemic and for his ongoing commitment to America's long-term scientific research, discovery, and innovation endeavors designed to prevent and treat kidney disease and save human life ([view award presentation](#)).

The presentation was made during the [4th Annual AAKP Public Policy Summit](#), hosted virtually, which brings together key influencers from across all sectors of the policy spectrum – patients, care partners, living donors, healthcare professionals, researchers/academia, and industry, along with both Federal agency and Congressional representatives. The 2021 Summit highlighted innovation in kidney biologics, diagnostics, and devices, and examined opportunities and challenges for accelerating treatment innovations in artificial kidneys, transplantation, and dialysis. The consistent messages shared among all 2021 presenters included the need to slow the spread of kidney disease, expand policies that honor full patient consumer care choice, and the need for better coordination across Federal regulatory and payment agencies to ensure new technologies enter the consumer market. The Summit was dedicated to the memory of former AAKP Board Member Brian Hess, a long-time advocate for kidney patient care choice and a champion of The Kidney Project, a KidneyX prize-winning initiative aimed at developing an artificial kidney ([read now](#)).

Richard Knight, AAKP President, former dialysis patient, and 14-year kidney transplant recipient stated, "This award recognizes Dr. Rodgers' relentless dedication to the kidney patient community, public service, and America's historic role as a leader in advanced research, medical innovation, and kidney care treatments. Through his leadership and urgency to help patients, he has accelerated advances in kidney disease research through the Kidney Precision Medicine Project (KPMP), APOL-1 genetic research, and other strategic initiatives and has won NIH/NIDDK an international reputation for including kidney patients as co-researchers whose life experiences are both valued and essential to future scientific breakthroughs." Knight is a former Congressional staffer and liaison to the Congressional Black Caucus and serves as the co-chair of the patient engagement subgroup for NIDDK's strategic planning committee, co-chair of the community engagement committee on NIDDK's Kidney Precision Medicine Project and is a member of the Scientific Registry for Transplant Recipients (SRTR) review committee.

Edward V. Hickey, III, USMC, AAKP Vice President and Chair of the Veteran's Health Initiative (VHI) and a chronic kidney disease patient stated, "The emphasis Dr. Rodgers and his team at the National Institutes of Health and NIDDK have placed on acute kidney injury research and the genetic aspects of kidney diseases are central to future innovations in disease detection and treatment that will help all Americans, especially those most at-risk, including minority communities, veterans, and long-haul COVID-19 patients. [The Decade of the Kidney](#) will be marked by great advances in kidney research and AAKP is proud to work alongside Dr. Rodgers and the network of NIH researchers he oversees as they continue to elevate patients as co-investigators and researchers in the battle against kidney diseases." Hickey is a former senior Congressional staffer with experience in two presidential

administrations, the Department of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) grant review process, and participated in the Congressional launch and appropriations for the Decade of the Brain, a federal strategic initiative that led to unprecedented research investments and breakthroughs in brain injuries, brain cancer, and Alzheimer's disease.

Paul T. Conway, AAKP Chair of Policy and Global Affairs and a 24-year kidney transplant patient stated, "Dr. Rodgers is an outstanding U.S. civil servant who has kept the best interests of kidney patients, their families, researchers, and the American taxpayer at the forefront of the NIH/NIDDK strategy and research agenda. He knows that kidney disease is a growing national health and workforce issue and his substantive inclusion of kidney patients and their unique insights and data within NIH/NIDDK has served as a model for best patient engagement practices for all research institutions and the private sector." Conway has served as Chief of Staff for the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and is a member of the External Evaluation Panel for the Kidney Precision Medicine Project (KPMP) and the Contract Management Board of the United States Renal Data System (USRDS).

AAKP national awards are presented for extraordinary leadership and excellence in the fight against kidney diseases. Awards are inspired by AAKP founders such as Shep Glazer, a kidney patient and former AAKP President, who dialyzed in front of the U.S. Congress over 50 years ago to show that dialysis was a life-saving bridge to kidney transplantation and a return to the workforce. His brave act helped facilitate the 1972 Congressional passage, and subsequent signing by former President Richard M. Nixon, of legislation that created modern Medicare kidney dialysis coverage. Dialysis coverage is available to any American diagnosed with kidney failure. The CMS program is the only disease specific entitlement program in the nation and it is estimated to have saved well over one million lives since 1973.

The 2021 AAKP Annual Policy Summit was supported by Gold Sponsors: Baxter Healthcare, CareDx, Inc., Sanofi Genzyme, Travere Therapeutics; Silver Sponsors: Akebia Pharmaceuticals, Bayer, CSL Behring, Natera, Otsuka Pharmaceuticals and Bronze Sponsors: Ardelyx, Horizon Therapeutics, Novartis and other supporters include AstraZeneca, major research organizations, and patient advocates nationwide.

For more information on AAKP's National Awards and for past recipients, please visit <https://aakp.org/center-for-patient-engagement-and-advocacy/advocacy-award/>.

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About the American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP): Since 1969, AAKP has been the largest kidney patient organization driving policy discussions on kidney patient consumer care choice and treatment innovation. By 1973, AAKP patients had collaborated with the U.S. Congress and White House to provide dialysis coverage for any person suffering kidney failure, a taxpayer-funded effort that has saved over one million lives. Over the past decade, AAKP patients have helped gain lifetime transplant drug coverage for kidney transplant recipients (2020); new patient-centered policies via the White House Executive Order on Advancing American Kidney Health (2019); new job protections for living organ donors from the U.S. Department of Labor (2018); and Congressional legislation allowing HIV positive organ transplants for HIV positive patients (2013). AAKP virtual platforms and social networks are internationally known for their impact. Follow AAKP on social media at [@kidneypatient](#) on Facebook and [@kidneypatients](#) on Twitter, and visit at www.aakp.org.