



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

May 16, 2022

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Jennifer Rate  
Marketing and Communications Manager  
(813) 400-2394  
[jrate@aakp.org](mailto:jrate@aakp.org)

**KIDNEY PATIENTS NAME TOP SAFETY LEADERS AMIDST COVID-19**

***AAKP Honors Yale's Dr. Alan Kliger and UK Scientist Shahid Muhammad***

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – As the COVID-19 death toll exceeds 1,000,000 American lives, the virus continues to disproportionately impact kidney patients, especially minorities, and threaten their safety across the nation and globe. Today, the American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP), America's oldest and largest fully independent kidney patient organization, announced its 2022 [Jenny Kitsen Patient Safety Award](#) recipients. The Kitsen award recognizes leaders and programs that substantively improve patient safety through innovations in health systems management and patient safety education. AAKP is an aggressive advocate for increased patient safety, patient consumer care choice, and the protection of patient and organ donor rights covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Kidney patients are historically a high-risk population, and during COVID-19, mortality rates among vulnerable patients living on dialysis and immunocompromised kidney transplant recipients have surged.

The recipients of its 2022 Safety Award include Dr. Alan Kliger ([watch OnDemand Dr. Kliger's Global Summit presentation, "Coronavirus: Kidney Community Stakeholder Response to Global Pandemic"](#)), a Clinical Professor of Medicine at the Yale School of Medicine, and Dr. Shahid Muhammad, a Specialist Biomedical Scientist affiliated with Coventry University School of Life Sciences (UK) and the University of the West of England (UWE) UK.

The 2022 awards mark the first time AAKP has simultaneously recognized safety leaders in the U.S. and overseas. AAKP's growing international impact and reach is based on its AAKP Global™ initiatives and the *Annual Global Summit on Kidney Disease Innovations*, an AAKP partnership event with the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences, which, in 2021, engaged over 20,000 patients and professionals across 80 countries. The 2022 Global Summit will be June 29 through 30. Free registration is available at <https://bit.ly/AAKPGlobalSummit22>.

Dr. Kliger stated, "On behalf of the American Society of Nephrology's (ASN) Nephrologists Transforming Dialysis Safety (NTDS) initiative, I am humbled to receive AAKP's Jenny Kitsen Patient Safety Award. Over the past six years, NTDS—working with the CDC, nephrologists, scientists, nurses, technicians, and patients—has targeted zero infections for dialysis patients to eliminate the second most common cause of death in this vulnerable population. This award is particularly meaningful for me, coming from AAKP, the premier kidney patient organization, and because the award is named in honor of my long-term colleague and inspiration, Jenny Kitsen. Patient Safety has truly come into its own in no small part because of AAKP advocacy. My profound thanks to AAKP." At Yale, Dr. Kliger has served as Senior Vice President of Medical Affairs for Yale New Haven Health System and was its Chief Quality Officer. He has served as the ASN's liaison to the U.S. Center for Disease Control's Health Infections Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC), Chair of the ASN's Nephrologists Transforming Dialysis Safety Workgroup, and co-chair of ASN's COVID-19 Response Team.

Dr. Muhammad stated, “I am very pleased to be listed as a recipient for the Jenny Kitsen Award as Academic Lead on behalf of the Renal Patient Support Group (RPSG). I put forward an application to implement important research relating to pediatric and adult nephrology research focusing on the exploration of using social media to understand and examine the interplay between social networks and experiences of living with CKD. The research effort will assess whether it is advantageous to involve allied health professionals and patients through online consultations and educational webinars through the RPSG social media platform to improve health literacy and lives of kidney patients, including pediatrics, young people, and adults.” Dr. Muhammad is the Academic Lead on behalf of the Renal Patient Support Group (RPSG), an Evidence-Based support group for Renal Patients and Care Providers. Dr. Muhammad is a member of the UK Healthcare Professions Council (HCPC), a Fellow of The Institute of Biomedical Sciences (FIBMS), and a Chartered Scientist under the UK Science Council (CSci). Dr. Muhammad has scientific expertise in pediatric and adult nephrology research practices. Retrospectively, Dr. Muhammad has contributed to several nephrology organizations including the British Association of Pediatric Nephrology (BAPN). AAKP announced a formal global partnership with the RPSG in 2020 ([read here](#)).

[AAKP President Richard Knight](#), a kidney transplant recipient and former dialysis patient, stated, “The Jenny Kitsen Patient Safety Award sets a very high standard for excellence in patient safety and education for health systems, professionals, and patients. I am very pleased that two outstanding professionals and patient advocates, Dr. Kliger and Dr. Muhammad, have received this award because their efforts have undoubtedly positively impacted countless kidney patients and their families. AAKP is a strong advocate for patient rights and safety, and the Patient Safety Award puts a spotlight on our commitment to identify leaders and best practices.” Mr. Knight serves as the Chair of the Community Engagement Committee for the Kidney Precision Medicine Project for the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK).

[AAKP’s Chair of Policy and Global Affairs Paul T. Conway](#) stated, “Kidney patients and their families are intensely aware of safety issues across the entire medical system, and COVID has identified many great strengths as well as areas for needed improvements through additional training and the creative use of virtual and social media technologies to better educate professionals and patients. Dr. Kliger is a courageous advocate for patient safety at both the individual and enterprise level, and Dr. Muhammad, as a kidney patient and scientist, continues to demonstrate how patient insight data gained through social media can transform learning and kidney education programs.” Conway is a former home dialysis patient and current transplant recipient who serves as AAKP’s Liaison to the CDC’s [Health Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee \(HICPAC\)](#). HICPAC is a Federal Advisory Committee appointed to provide advice and guidance to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the CDC regarding infection control, strategies for surveillance, prevention, and control of healthcare-related infections and antimicrobial resistance.

AAKP’s endowed safety award was created in 2014 by the Board of Directors of the former kidney Network of New England to continue the network’s safety initiatives led by Ms. Jenny Kitsen, a social worker and former member of the AAKP Board of Directors, who has dedicated her career to patient safety. Among the organizations eligible to apply for the Patient Safety Award are public institutions, government agencies, and 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(6) organizations. Among prior recipients are the American Nephrology Nurses Association, the Renal Physicians Association, and the CDC Making Dialysis Safer Coalition. A complete list of awardees can be viewed at <https://aakp.org/programs-and-events/jenny-kitsen-patient-safety-grant/>.

AAKP has a long history of promoting patient safety and infection control efforts through its [Patient Safety Award program](#) and close collaboration with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). AAKP awarded one of its first National Public Service Awards to Dr. Priti Patel, a member of the U.S. Uniformed Public Health Service and former Dialysis Activity Leader within the CDC’s Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion (read this [January 2017 aakpRENALIFE article feature on Dr. Priti Patel](#)) and founding partner of the CDC Making Dialysis Safer Coalition in 2016. The CDC and AAKP co-branded [Conversation Starter to Prevent Infections in Dialysis Patients](#) provides guidance for patients and family members to initiate a discussion with dialysis facility staff about steps the facility takes to prevent infections. AAKP has also implemented a mentorship pilot program, [“Enhanced Patient Engagement to Improve Patient-Centered](#)

[Outcomes Among Chronic Kidney Disease.](#)” through a Patient-Centered Outcomes and Research Institute (PCORI) Engagement Award, pairing CKD and dialysis patients in the Atlanta, Georgia, area with AAKP Ambassadors trained as mentors to provide support in coping with the challenges of kidney disease and expertise on how to advocate for their right to home dialysis and transplants.

###

Since 1969, AAKP has driven national policy discussions on kidney patient consumer care choice and treatment innovation. In 2018, AAKP established the largest U.S. kidney voter registration program, *KidneyVoters*<sup>™</sup>. 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). Follow AAKP on social media at [@kidneypatient](#) on Facebook, [@kidneypatients](#) on Twitter, and [@kidneypatients](#) on Instagram, and visit [www.aakp.org](http://www.aakp.org) for more information.