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**GRANT CYCLE OPENS FOR TOP AWARD IN KIDNEY PATIENT SAFETY**

***Amidst Ongoing COVID-19 and Flu Threats, Safety Advocates Drive Prevention***

**TAMPA, FL** – The American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP), the largest independent kidney patient organization in the nation, announced the opening of the 2023 grant cycle for its [AAKP Jenny Kitsen Patient Safety Award](#). The award funds a lecture or program that advances new approaches for increasing kidney patient safety knowledge and/or the dissemination of new research pertaining to effective safety procedures among medical professionals responsible for patient safety.

Immunocompromised and immunosuppressed kidney patients, including dialysis patients and kidney transplant patients, remain highly vulnerable to COVID-19 and the flu and have been among the most heavily impacted populations in terms of mortality rates throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. They are also at dramatically higher risks for acquiring healthcare-associated infections (HAI), often associated with in-center dialysis facilities, hospitals, and other healthcare settings. Kidney patients are medically fragile due to their weakened immune systems and typically manage multiple other medical conditions and co-morbidities. Infections among kidney patients can be challenging to address, require specialized care, and often involve hospitalizations and surgery. The consensus among policy and medical experts is that high standards for patient safety and infection control in healthcare settings, strictly observed, save patients' lives, reduce burdens on medical professionals and help avoid unnecessary costs to both taxpayers and insurers.

AAKP President [Richard Knight](#), a former dialysis patient and current kidney transplant recipient, stated, "Every kidney patient entering a medical facility, especially dialysis patients receiving care in dialysis centers, should know their lives depend upon the infection control protocols medical professionals manage and how seriously healthcare systems prioritize their safety. This award puts a spotlight on best practices in patient safety and infection control, the professionals accountable for maintaining the integrity of safety protocols, and substantive efforts to protect patient lives while reducing care costs to taxpayers and insurers."

Among organizations eligible to apply for the award are 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(6) organizations, government agencies at every level, and other organizations as outlined on the [application](#). Applicants seeking additional information should contact Erin Kahle, Director of Patient Insights, Data Analytics, and Advocacy, by emailing [ekahle@aakp.org](mailto:ekahle@aakp.org). **Applications are due December 30, 2022.**

AAKP empowers patients to take charge of their care and safety through extensive online disease education programming. AAKP collaborates with a wide network of global and national kidney medical experts and leading medical research institutions and universities on research initiatives focused on kidney medicine, the detection and management of acute kidney injury (AKI), and infection control and prevention ([read more](#)). In 2022, AAKP granted its first international safety recognition, honoring The Renal Patients Support Group (RPSG) of the United Kingdom. The RPSG participates in the AAKP Global™ initiative and is part of AAKP's expanding international collaborative of patient organizations focused on patient consumer-centered policies and innovations.

AAKP works closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to make certain infection control standards remain a priority in kidney facility performance metrics and reimbursement decisions related to kidney care. AAKP is a founding partner of the CDC's Making Dialysis Safer Coalition and an active participant in the CDC's [Federal Health Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee \(HICPAC\)](#). The HICPAC is a Federal Advisory Committee appointed to provide advice and guidance to the CDC and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regarding strategies for surveillance, prevention, and control of healthcare-associated infections, antimicrobial resistance, and related events in healthcare settings. AAKP Chair of Policy and Global Affairs [Paul T. Conway](#) serves as AAKP liaison to HICPAC. AAKP and the CDC co-branded the highly utilized "[Conversation Starter to Prevent Infections in Dialysis Patients](#)," a tool for patients and family members to initiate a discussion with dialysis facility staff about infection prevention, and also produced the [HealthLine webinar, "Making Dialysis Safer for Patients."](#)

To view a recent AAKP webinar on the ongoing threat COVID-19 poses to kidney patients, watch the AAKP interview with Dr. Michael Osterholm, Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota and a contributing health expert to the national media ([watch OnDemand](#)). At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, AAKP launched its [COVID-19 Resource web page](#) to educate national and global patient audiences on what they could do to minimize their risk of contracting the virus. To date, AAKP has conducted eight major national and international meetings and dozens of targeted safety educational sessions and [HealthLine webinars](#) to educate medical professionals, patients, and families on the danger of COVID-19, evolving vaccination strategies, and best practices for risk mitigation. These programs have reached audiences in over 90 countries, engaged tens of thousands of viewers, and involved experts from AAKP's strategic partners at the CDC; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; American Society of Transplantation; the American Society of Transplant Surgeons; the Renal Physicians Association; and the American Society of Nephrology.

The Patient Safety Award was created in 2014 by the former Network of New England, whose Board of Directors established an endowment to continue the patient safety work of the non-profit organization led by former Executive Director Jenny Kitsen. Past recipients include Dr. Alan Kliger, Chair, Nephrologists Transforming Dialysis Safety, American Society of Nephrology (2022); Kidneys Quest Foundation (2021); Satellite Healthcare (2020); Alabama A&M University (2020); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019); National Kidney Foundation (2018); National Renal Administrators Association (2018, 2016); A.T. Still University of Oral Health (2017); All Kidney Patients Support Group (2017); Renal Physicians Association (2016); American Nephrology Nurses Association (2015); and Forum of ESRD Networks (2015).

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**About the American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP):** Founded in 1969, AAKP is the largest kidney patient organization driving policy discussions on kidney patient consumer care choice and treatment innovations. In 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 under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) 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 its website at [www.aakp.org](http://www.aakp.org).