



The foundation of kidney care.

NATIONAL MEDIA RELEASE

Kidney failure comes at high financial cost for many Canadians

New report shows inequities in financial support for dialysis patients

[Montreal, Quebec – March 28, 2018] A report released by The Kidney Foundation of Canada shows that a significant proportion of Canadians undergoing dialysis treatment experience financial hardship as a result of the extra costs associated with kidney disease. Increased costs are mainly due to transportation to dialysis treatment and medication.

In addition to the emotional and physical strain that often accompanies kidney failure, a financial burden exists that Canadian patients bear. This burden has been ignored for too long. Through an increasing number of applications to its emergency short-term financial assistance program and discussions with social workers, The Kidney Foundation of Canada became aware of increasing financial need. It was evident that further investigation was needed; a patient survey was launched to gather more data. The Kidney Foundation of Canada released its **Burden of Out-of-Pocket Costs for Canadians with Kidney Failure** report today, making it clear that the financial hardships associated with dialysis are significant.

“Unfortunately, results of the survey were not surprising. Canadians with kidney failure and their families face significant out-of-pocket costs, a financial burden which further compounded by a loss of income that is often associated with starting dialysis,” said Elizabeth Myles, National Executive Director of The Kidney Foundation of Canada. “As anticipated, we found there are gaps and inconsistencies in financial supports for people on dialysis across the country. To help address this, The Kidney Foundation of Canada is calling on governments to act on our recommendations to address the financial burden of kidney failure experienced by Canadians and their families”.

The Kidney Foundation of Canada makes the following recommendations to all levels of government to address the financial burden of kidney failure.

Transportation

- 1. Subsidize transportation costs and expand access to travel grants, particularly for people in rural areas.**
 - 75% of patients on dialysis receive treatment in-centre (at hospitals or community satellites units), according to the latest data from the Canadian Organ Replacement Register. Respondents on in-centre hemodialysis reported an average monthly out-of-pocket cost of \$155 (\$1,858 per year), \$57 of which is spent on just travel and parking each month (\$684 per year). The costs may be even greater, as categories left unanswered were calculated as \$0.



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Medication

2. Minimize disparities in accessing medications for people with kidney disease and develop mechanisms to offset costs equitably across jurisdictions.

- The cost of medication is a barrier to optimal health. Nearly 20% of respondents said they have missed purchasing medication in the last six months due to financial barrier. This proportion increased to 27% when looking only at respondents who fall below Low-income cut-off (LICO). The average reported cost of prescription drugs was \$756 annually and increased to \$1,083 with the inclusion of non-prescription medications.

Adequate Support for Home Dialysis

3. Provide adequate support for home dialysis through reimbursing utility costs and considering the financial and health literacy of patients when operationalizing “home first” policies.

- The cost-shifting associated with home hemodialysis means that it is the most costly treatment in terms of out-of-pocket costs. Respondents on home hemodialysis indicated that their average out-of-pocket cost for electricity and water for their home hemodialysis machine is \$1,152 annually.
- Other home-based options with lower out-of-pocket costs, such as peritoneal dialysis, are not accessed by lower-income people. There is a need for greater support to allow lower-income individuals to access home-based therapies, thus reducing the burden of transportation costs to treatment.

Visit kidney.ca/burden to read the full report.

"The Canadian Association of Nephrology Social Workers (CANSW) was privileged to partner with The Kidney Foundation of Canada in administering the survey of dialysis patients," said CANSW president Michelle Jensen. "Our members are passionate about this research and fully endorse the recommended actions. We are all motivated by the hope that the results will help to inform and support advocacy efforts at a national level and help reduce barriers to care and to increase public knowledge of the financial impact of kidney disease."

The Kidney Foundation of Canada provides an emergency short-term financial assistance program to help bridge a gap for patients who may need to apply for subsidy programs or find alternative solutions as they consider treatment options.

About the Burden of Out-of-Pocket Costs for Canadians with Kidney Failure survey

The Kidney Foundation of Canada, in association with Dr. Scott Klarenbach, Professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of Alberta, conducted the Burden of Out-of-Pocket Costs for Canadians with Kidney Failure survey in 2016 to obtain data that would provide evidence of the economic burden associated with dialysis, as well as how this might impact patients and the care they receive. Dr. Klarenbach's research interests include health outcomes and health economics research, and he has conducted numerous economic evaluations and health technology assessments for both chronic and



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acute conditions. The survey was conducted online and via paper-based surveys administered by CANSW members in over 20 centres and was available in English, French and Chinese.

“As a health economist, I have participated in many studies that consider costs and health outcomes from the health care payer perspective,” comments Dr. Klarenbach. “While this is important to ensure the sustainability of our health care system, much less data and evidence on the financial and economic impact of kidney disease and its treatment from the patient perspective is available. Understanding the financial barriers and consequences might allow policies that lead to optimal health outcomes while minimizing health care costs and the financial burden to patients.”

About The Kidney Foundation of Canada

Kidney health and improved lives for all people affected by kidney disease - for over 50 years, this vision has guided The Kidney Foundation of Canada to be a collaborative, inventive and focused leader in the development of programs, services, research opportunities and awareness campaigns that have had a positive impact on the millions of Canadians living with, or at risk of developing kidney disease.

The Foundation's National Research Program has grown to become one of the most important sources of funding for scientists conducting kidney-related research. The Kidney Foundation of Canada is also committed to providing education, information and support about kidneys and kidney disease.

For more information, visit www.kidney.ca.

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