

September 2011

**DPC Patient Ambassador Call to Action**

(Please complete by October 7, 2011)

**Call to Action #1 Background: Support DPC's Legislative Agenda**

In September, DPC will be sending several activists to Capitol Hill to meet with their Members of Congress in support of two of our current legislative priorities. You can help by emailing, calling or writing to your Members of Congress in conjunction with the activists' upcoming visits. The two legislative items to be discussed are the extension of Medicare coverage for immunosuppressive drugs for kidney transplant patients past the current 36 month benefit and cost-saving and revenue increasing alternatives for reducing the federal deficit without having to cut more from patients.

Currently, Medicare only covers immunosuppressive drugs for transplant patients, not eligible for Medicare due to age or disability, for 36 months. After this 3-year period, these patients are forced to find alternative coverage. Because of the cost of the medications, many patients forgo transplants or face losing their transplant prematurely and therefore end up returning to Medicare coverage for dialysis. By extending anti-rejection drug coverage for the life of the transplant, this legislation will be a cost-savings for Medicare and allows transplantation to become a financially viable option for more patients.

Federal deficit reduction efforts are currently under way in Washington, DC and there are potential cost savings associated with the Medicare ESRD program and the Health Benefit Exchanges that are positive alternatives to across the board cuts in the program. Two alternatives that DPC activists will share with members of Congress include allowing dialysis patients the right to maintain private insurance coverage and allowing kidney patient's access to insurance subsidies.

**Call to Action #1 Instructions:**

DPC encourages you to contact your members of Congress by phone, email or standard mail about these two issues. Please refer to the sample letters to lawmakers included in this month's packet as a general guide, but please personalize your letter with your own story and information. Also, please be sure to visit the DPC Advocacy website at <http://www.capwiz.com/dpcitizens/home/> and complete the Action Alerts for these issues.

**Call to Action #2 Background: Write a Letter to the Editor of your Local Newspaper**

Kidney disease affects thirty one million Americans and over a half million of them have end stage renal disease (ESRD), yet the issue continues to be a small topic on the media's radar. While the disease is a pressing health care issue, it is only beginning to be recognized as a major public health problem. Patients who are afflicted with it often experience co-morbidities such as heart disease, often due to high cholesterol levels, further complicating their health.

An effective way to help increase awareness for kidney disease and its impact on your community is by reaching out to your local newspaper to submit a letter to the editor (LTE). An LTE is a short communication – usually 250 words or less – about a topic that is of interest to you and relevant to your

**Did You Know?**  
Patient Ambassadors have their own online resource website. Use the link at the bottom of the page to get started.

community. These letters are considered for printing year-round, but are especially likely to be printed when they are related to a recent news item or a special event. And as September is National High Cholesterol Month, it is a great time to raise awareness with an LTE. Most local newspapers will allow you to send these letters in by e-mail, fax or standard mail

**Call to Action #2 Instructions**

DPC encourages you to submit an LTE to your local newspaper about the link between high cholesterol and kidney disease and why it is important to learn how to curb your cholesterol levels, especially if you are at increased risk. Please refer to the sample letters to the editor included in this month's packet as a general guide, but please personalize your letter with your own story and information.

Please do not forget to complete and return the Call to Action Reporting Form by **October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011**. You may also complete this form online at [www.dialysispatients.org/patient-ambassador-resource-page](http://www.dialysispatients.org/patient-ambassador-resource-page).