



March 31, 2025

Jayanta Bhattacharya, MA, MD, PhD
Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Director Bhattacharya:

On behalf of the more than 37,000,000 Americans living with kidney diseases and the 22,000 nephrologists, scientists, and other kidney health care professionals who are members of the American Society of Nephrology (ASN), congratulations on your confirmation as Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Your leadership of the world's foremost research agency comes at a pivotal time for biomedical research, and ASN is encouraged by your commitment to refocusing NIH's mission on addressing chronic diseases, ensuring scientific rigor, and fostering innovation.

As you emphasized in your confirmation hearing, chronic diseases severely impact millions of Americans, contributing to the decline in life expectancy and placing a tremendous burden on our healthcare system. Kidney diseases are the ninth leading cause of death in the United States¹. Despite this growing prevalence, 90% of people who have kidney diseases remain unaware they are at risk of kidney failure due to the asymptomatic nature of early stages of kidney diseases².

President Donald J. Trump recognized these challenges during his first term when he issued an [Executive Order on Advancing American Kidney Health](#), the only executive order of its kind, focused on combatting a chronic disease. The Executive Order emphasizes the need to "support research regarding preventing, treating and slowing progression of kidney disease"³. This landmark focus and recent Congressional action to improve kidney care and transplantation are important steps in the right direction, and make up for a century-long underinvestment in kidney research that has stalled the kidney community's search for breakthroughs.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/deaths.htm>

² <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-statistics/kidney-disease>

³ <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-advancing-american-kidney-health/>

Kidney diseases and their complications diminish quality of life and drive significant healthcare costs, making it imperative that NIH invest in solutions that can prevent, slow, and ultimately cure kidney diseases. The Medicare program spends more than \$150 billion—over 24% of its total fee-for-service spending—on Americans living with kidney diseases. Kidney failure, which affects only 1% of Medicare beneficiaries, accounts for nearly 6% of traditional Medicare spending⁴. These costs do not even account for the economic costs associated with un- and underemployment among affected citizens and their caretakers and those of disability insurance.

ASN believes that NIH can help continue to deliver on President Trump’s Executive Order on Advancing American Kidney Health with meaningful investments in kidney disease research that will drive breakthroughs to save lives, improve the nation’s kidney health, increase the productivity of US citizens, and reduce one of the costliest expenditures for the federal government. NIH has a vital role to play in all three of the Executive Order goals, particularly Goal 1: Reducing the Risk of Kidney Failure, including “research to improve identification of populations at risk and those in early stages of kidney disease”⁵.

NIH’s emphasis on scientific reproducibility, generalizability, and innovation is vital to ensure that kidney disease research translates into real-world improvements in patient care. ASN stands ready to support efforts that enhance the rigor and transparency of biomedical research, ensuring that findings are both replicable and actionable for clinicians and patients alike.

To ensure that advancements in nephrology remain at the forefront of kidney health research, ASN is partnering with the American Association of Kidney Patients, American Kidney Fund, American Society of Pediatric Nephrology, and the National Kidney Foundation to develop a bold and comprehensive research plan that identifies existing and emerging areas of opportunity for kidney health research across the entire federal government. The final report, which will soon be available, will serve as a comprehensive roadmap for how the federal government (especially NIH) and the larger kidney community including ASN could invest in kidney research to deliver better diagnostics, therapies, and tools for preventing and treating kidney diseases and to improve patient care while driving down costs.

⁴ <https://usrds-adr.niddk.nih.gov/2023/end-stage-renal-disease/9-healthcare-expenditures-for-persons-with-esrd>

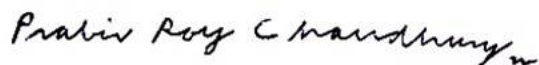
⁵ <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/private/pdf/262046/AdvancingAmericanKidneyHealth.pdf>

ASN's 22,000 members, staff, and I commend Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., and you for focusing on improving the lives of the more than 37,000,000 Americans living with kidney diseases. The cost in lives and dollars of kidney diseases—as a leading chronic disease—is staggering. The United States can do better, and ASN pledges to work with Secretary Kennedy and you on improving the nation's kidney health just as we did during President Trump's first administration. By investing in groundbreaking research and supporting clinical advancements in kidney care, we can make substantial strides toward improving public health and making America healthy again.

In closing, however, I must emphasize that recent NIH funding cuts threaten to undermine these efforts and contradict the goals articulated by HHS Secretary Kennedy and yourself to address chronic diseases and improve health outcomes. The termination of the coordinating centers for critical networks disproportionately impacts nephrology and geriatric nephrology investigators working to improve outcomes for Americans living with kidney diseases. These programs provide vital research infrastructure and support training and career development for early-stage investigators committed to strengthening the medical workforce. Reducing investments in kidney research jeopardizes progress in tackling chronic diseases and runs counter to the administration's stated mission of improving kidney health for all Americans.

Once again, congratulations on your confirmation. ASN looks forward to partnering with you and NIH in advancing kidney health research. To discuss this letter, ASN's support for kidney health research, or the society, please contact Ryan Murray, ASN Senior Manager of Policy and Government Affairs, at rmurray@asn-online.org or 202-400-2485.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Prabir Roy-Chaudhury".

Prabir Roy-Chaudhury, MD, PhD, FASN
President