

December 21, 2016

Dear Mr. President,

Kidney transplantation offers patients with end stage renal disease a longer and improved quality of life at a lower cost than their only alternative treatment—dialysis. Unfortunately, with over 100,000 patients on the ever-growing waitlist and only 17,000 kidney transplants performed annually, the demand for organs far exceeds the supply. Patients wait for 5-8 years on average and many die while on the waitlist.

For approximately one-third of the patients on the waitlist, their plight is made more difficult because their highly sensitized status from prior pregnancies, blood transfusions, or transplants means that they are difficult to match and will likely stay on the waitlist longer than their non-sensitized peers. For those sensitized patients on the waitlist with a willing but incompatible live donor, they can participate in kidney-paired donation (also called kidney exchanges or chains), but more than half will not find a compatible match.

Building on recent breakthroughs in incompatible kidney transplants, the undersigned 38 organ transplant centers are announcing a collaborative study – the largest data sharing arrangement of its type – to identify best practices for the one-third of kidney patients who are difficult to transplant because they have a highly sensitized immune system that would attack the transplanted kidney. This study will provide new insights into treatment options for this population through what is known as “desensitization” so that transplants are not rejected.

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