



National Institute of Diabetes and  
Digestive and Kidney Diseases

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For Immediate Release  
June 8, 2004

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### **Renal Physicians and NIH Release Web Tool to Coordinate Care for Kidney Patients**

BETHESDA, MD -- The Renal Physicians Association (RPA) and the National Kidney Disease Education Program (NKDEP) announced today the availability of a *Nephrology Consult Letter Template*, a new web-based tool to improve coordination of care for kidney patients.

Chronic kidney disease (CKD)--affecting approximately 20 million Americans--has reached epidemic proportions, and the number of people in the United States who go on to develop kidney failure has doubled each of the last two decades. This trend is likely to continue, leaving nephrologists with too many patients to manage alone.

Anticipating the shortage, nephrologists are turning to primary care providers (PCPs) for help. PCPs make logical partners since they usually are the first to see kidney patients. But agreeing early-on about who will handle what aspects of care will be critical to establishing and maintaining good partnerships and providing high-quality care to patients.

“Collaborations between primary care providers and nephrologists can result in improved care of the CKD patient and improved outcomes,” said RPA President Jim Weiss, M.D., a nephrologist in private practice in Pittsburgh. “We hope the *Consult Letter* will help physicians communicate preferences and expectations more clearly and avoid assumptions that could lead to duplications or omissions of services for patients,” Weiss said.

Check boxes, drop down menus and fill-in-the-blanks let nephrologists quickly tailor the *Consult Letter* to an individual patient, reflecting the type and stage of kidney disease and which aspects of care and testing will be managed by each doctor. The *Consult Letter* also automatically calculates GFR, or glomerular filtration rate, an important measure of kidney function. The letter can be saved, emailed and printed on office stationery. Content is largely based on the National Kidney Foundation's KDOQI guidelines and RPA's guideline, *Appropriate Patient Preparation for Renal Replacement Therapy*.

“NKDEP has been working to increase awareness through community-based outreach programs targeting people most likely to develop kidney disease. This important project with RPA has given us an extraordinary opportunity to approach our goals from a very different path,” said Thomas H. Hostetter, M.D., director of NKDEP. “We are increasingly asked to do more in less time. Any system-wide changes we can make to streamline administrative processes and improve communication are going to translate into more time for our patients and better disease management.”

The *Nephrology Consult Letter Template* is on both the RPA and NKDEP websites at [www.renalmd.org](http://www.renalmd.org) and [www.nkdep.nih.gov](http://www.nkdep.nih.gov), respectively.

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### **About the Renal Physicians Association**

Founded in 1973, RPA supports the efforts of nephrologists, practice managers, advanced practice nurses, and physician assistants who are committed to providing quality health care for people with kidney disease and related disorders.

### **About the National Kidney Disease Education Program**

NKDEP is dedicated to raising awareness about the seriousness of kidney disease and steps that can be taken to protect the kidneys and prevent kidney failure. The program is an initiative of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, part of the National Institutes of Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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