

“Chronic Kidney Disease: A Close Look at Its Impact on Americans”

Chronic Kidney Disease. According to the National Kidney Foundation (NKF), "37 million American adults have kidney disease, and most don't know it."¹ The alarming statistic shows a disconnect in the U.S. Healthcare System and a breakdown in communication between physicians and patients. How do we bridge the gap? Things are starting to change, and companies are disrupting the kidney care industry by offering care management, identifying at-risk patients, educating individuals on treatment modalities – including dialysis, all at a reduced cost. Being proactive versus reactive will slow the progression of the disease and provide patients with a better quality of life.

Picture a loved one – family member, friend, or significant other facing the day-to-day challenges of being diagnosed with the disease. Maybe they are struggling with the top two leading causes of kidney disease, which are diabetes and hypertension. Or, what about following a strict renal diet? Now, imagine them being connected to a dialysis machine to continue living. Journey with me as I share a story about my family – specifically, my mother and brother. My loved ones' experience with kidney disease encompasses the best- and worst-case scenarios.

It was 1997. I was in the second grade, and it was a regular day for the Sturdivant Family. I am sure that my brothers and I were running around the house playing. Yet the life of my immediate family changed forever once my mother, Deloris, returned home. My brothers and I walked into the kitchen upon her arrival. She greeted us and then had a conversation with us. At this point, she could have potentially assigned chores. Or, someone could be in trouble. So, my brothers and I lined up, and she stated that the doctor told her that she would need dialysis treatments. Of course, we had no idea what that meant. How could small children understand such a life-changing diagnosis? My mother was strong, determined, and direct with us. She did not appear to be afraid or fearful of her future. Looking back, I wonder how she felt when the nephrologist delivered the news. Did she have any prior knowledge of renal failure? I can only imagine how it feels to receive a diagnosis of kidney disease.

Initially, my mother began her treatments through Home Hemodialysis (HHD). This process filters unwanted toxins and wastes out of the body through the blood and removes any excess fluids.² I recall the first time I saw brown "Baxter" boxes in our home. I remember this strange machine that my mother used with what looked like a balloon full of water to complete her treatment. Fast forward to 2017, I served as a Patient Care Technician at DaVita, Inc. – (a dialysis clinic), and I now understand that what I thought was water is saline solution. My mother was on HHD for a few years before transitioning to an in-center hemodialysis clinic. As of 2021, my mother still goes to a dialysis clinic three times a week. The NKF estimates that the average life expectancy of a dialysis patient is 5-10 years, but my mother beat the odds – 24 years and counting!

My mother was not my only family member with a renal failure diagnosis; my oldest brother, Tyson, was diagnosed with end-stage renal failure in his twenties. Both my mother and brother's renal failure stems from issues with hypertension. Tyson was one of the most resilient individuals I have ever met. He would work 12-hour night shifts and go to dialysis immediately after. For five years, he successfully kept his career, kept up with extracurricular activities, playing sports, playing video games, and seeing his friends. On September 14, 2014, the Sturdivant Family was no longer the same. My hero, Tyson, lost his battle with end-stage renal failure. Tyson's death ignited my passion for kidney care and the rest of my life to transform the state of kidney care. My family represented 2 out of the 37 million American adults struggling with the same issues. I want my story to inspire you, and I urge you to support the life-changing work of the millions of individuals impacted by kidney disease!

Take Action Today:

- **Education: Learn from organizations specializing in kidney care, such as CVS Kidney Care™, Strive Health, DaVita, Inc. Cricket Health, Somatus, and Fresenius Medical Care. Share what you know to raise awareness.**
- **Volunteer: Give back to the kidney care population with a monetary donation or volunteer your time. Check out opportunities at the American Kidney Fund, American Association of Kidney Patients, NKF, NephCure Kidney International, and other non-profit organizations.**
- **Organ Donation: Become an organ donor and assist individuals that need a kidney or other organs. Every donation will help to save the lives of deserving patients. Please visit www.organdonor.gov/sign-up for further instructions.**

For more information on chronic kidney disease and how you can get involved with the cause, please feel free to visit kidneycontenders.com.

¹Cdc.gov. 2021. *Chronic Kidney Disease in the United States, 2021*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.cdc.gov/kidneydisease/publications-resources/ckd-national-facts.html#:~:text=CKD%20is%20Common%20Among%20US%20Adults&text=More%20than%201%20in%207,are%20estimated%20to%20have%20CKD.&text=As%20many%20as%209%20in,not%20know%20they%20have%20CKD.>> [Accessed 30 December 2021].

²Greene, Tom; Daugirdas, John T.; Depner, Thomas A.; Gotch, Frank; Kuhlman, Martin. In *American Journal of Kidney Diseases*. 2009 53(5):835-844 Language: English. DOI: 10.1053/j.ajkd.2008.12.039, Database: ScienceDirect