



American Society of Transplant Surgeons

July 1, 2009

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Chairman
Committee on Energy & Commerce
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy & Commerce
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Draft House Health Reform Bill - Sec. 1232 Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage

Dear Chairmen Waxman and Pallone:

On behalf of the American Society of Transplant Surgeons (ASTS), I write to sincerely thank you for your leadership in including the provisions of H.R. 1458, the Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act of 2009, in Section 1232 of the draft House health reform package. This provision will address a critical problem for kidney transplant patients across the country. It will enable more kidney patients to afford transplants and reduce the likelihood of organ rejection among transplant recipients, dramatically improving the quality of life for these Medicare beneficiaries and having the added effect of saving the government money in the long term.

ASTS is an organization comprised of over 1500 transplant surgeons, physicians and scientists dedicated to excellence in transplantation surgery through education and research. ASTS has long advocated for kidney transplant recipients to receive coverage of immunosuppressive drugs for the life of the transplant through Medicare Part B. Extending Medicare immunosuppressive drug coverage beyond the current 36-month limit would improve transplant outcomes and enable more kidney patients who lack private insurance to consider transplantation. No one should lose a transplant because of inability to pay for the drugs to maintain the transplanted organ. Studies have shown there is a higher quality of life with a transplant, and recipients are more likely to return to work than dialysis patients.

We thank you for your leadership on organ donation and transplantation issues. Providing extended coverage for immunosuppressive drugs under Medicare is sound public policy that will reduce transplant failures for patients who cannot afford the ongoing costs of the medications. It will also reduce the likelihood of organ failure, thereby reducing Medicare expenses for re-transplantation and unnecessary dialysis. We hope to continue working with you to ensure passage of this provision in the context of the House health reform legislation.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Merion, MD
President

National Office
2461 South Clark Street
Suite 640
Arlington, VA 22202
Phone: 703 414-7870
Fax: 703 414-7874
asts@asts.org
www.asts.org

President
Robert M. Merion, MD
University of Michigan
2922 Taubman Center
1500 E. Medical Center Dr.
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-5331
Phone: 734 936-7336
Fax: 734 763-3187
merionb@umich.edu

President-Elect
Michael M. Abecassis, MD, MBA
Northwestern University
Division of Transplantation
675 N. St. Clair Street, #17-200
Chicago, IL 60611
Phone: 312 695-0359
Fax: 312 695-1817
mabecass@nmh.org

Secretary
Kim M. Olthoff, MD
University of Pennsylvania
Department of Surgery
3400 Spruce St - 2 Dulles
Philadelphia, PA 19104
Phone: 215 662-6136
Fax: 215 662-2244
kim.olthoff@uphs.upenn.edu

Treasurer
Alan N. Langnas, DO
University of Nebraska
983285 Nebraska Medical Center
Omaha, NE 68198-3285
Phone: 402 559-8390
Fax: 402 559-3434
alangnas@unmc.edu

Immediate Past President
John P. Roberts, MD

Past President
Goran B. Klintmalm, MD, PhD

Councilors-at-Large
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R. Mark Ghobrial, MD, PhD
Robert S. Higgins, MD, MSHA
Elizabeth A. Pomfret, MD, PhD

Executive Director
Katrina Crist, MBA
katrina.crist@asts.org