

Overdue Changes in Current Healthcare Policy Will Save Billions in Costs to Canada

Thousands of Canadians suffer needlessly each year and billions of dollars are wasted by an inefficient healthcare system that prioritizes dialysis as the primary treatment for kidney failure, despite evidence that kidney transplant provides superior outcomes, longer life expectancy, and a better quality of life.

Key Points

- The Canadian healthcare system is not working for kidney patients and donors.
- Over a 5-year period, every 100 kidney transplants would save the healthcare system approximately \$20 million, driven primarily by hospital-based dialysis costs.
- The 5-year mortality rate for hemodialysis patients remains unacceptably high at approximately 50%, rivaling the mortality rates of stage IV cancer.
- In 2021, 29,835 Canadians were on dialysis and only 5% of them received a kidney transplant.
- In 2018, in Ontario alone, over \$660 million was spent on renal services, including dialysis care, while only \$20 million was provided for kidney transplant.
- If Canada could increase the total number of transplants from 5% to 6% of dialysis patients, an additional 288 transplants could occur each year – up to 1,440 over five years, saving \$288 million in dialysis costs - billions over the next decade.

Call to Action

A system-wide reform of the Canadian healthcare system centred on transplant as the first and best treatment for kidney failure would save thousands of lives and realize billions of dollars in health care costs related to dialysis, including disability benefits, lost work productivity, increased financial burden on patients and families, and countless other social service support costs.

The **Transplant 1st Campaign** is an urgent call to action to reform the Canadian healthcare system to give more patients the opportunity to receive kidney transplants.

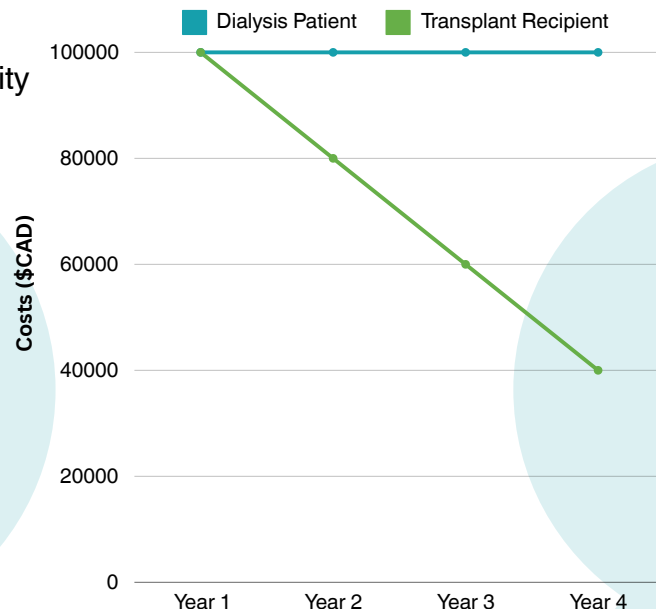
Cost to Canadian Kidney Patients

Patients and donors experience significant gaps in care that prevent timely access to kidney transplant, with many losing their opportunity to receive a transplant at all. ***The 5-year mortality rate for hemodialysis patients remains unacceptably high at approximately 50%.*** Patients and donors commonly report facing systemic delays and barriers that, if resolved, could better realize the opportunity for living kidney donor transplantation.

Cost of Dialysis vs. Transplant

The cost of providing dialysis treatment to patients with end-stage kidney disease is one of the most expensive publicly funded medical treatments in Western medicine. Transplants break this cycle because most people with transplants can work. Eighty per cent of patients on dialysis become too ill to work, resulting in over \$300 million per year in costs to disability insurance and the Canadian Pension Plan.

In 2018, in Ontario alone, over \$660 million was spent on renal services, including dialysis care, while only \$20 million was provided for kidney transplant. The costs of dialysis for patients in Canada is \$100,000 per patient per year. By comparison, the initial cost for transplantation is approximately \$100,000 for the first year of transplantation but tapers in subsequent years at approximately \$20,000 per year. Bottom line, more transplants relieve the burden of increasing healthcare costs on an over-stressed system.



Lives and Costs That Could Be Saved

In 2021, close to 30,000 Canadians were on dialysis and only 5% (1502) of them received a kidney transplant. If Canada could increase the total number of transplants by just 1% (from 5% to 6%) an additional 288 transplants could occur every year in Canada – up to 1,440 more lives saved over five years. Over a 5-year period, every 100 kidney transplants would save the healthcare system approximately \$20 million, driven primarily by hospital-based dialysis costs. If 1,440 people avoid or are taken off dialysis, the healthcare system would save \$288 million in dialysis costs alone over five years (not including other costs such as disability).

Time for Change is Now

The bottom line is that it's time for Canada to adopt a **Transplant 1st** approach to kidney care, both to save kidney patients falling through the cracks and to take concrete steps to reduce the growing burden of kidney disease of our healthcare system. The Patient Partner Coalition is developing a 5-point plan to help the healthcare system ensure all kidney patients get the best chance at living long, healthy, productive lives and all donors are given the opportunity to help save a life.

The Patient Partner Coalition of the Kidney Patient and Donor Alliance Canada, is a grassroots group of kidney patients and donors working in partnership with researchers and healthcare providers. As Patients and Donors, we have first-hand experience of the benefits of kidney transplant and want to help more patients access transplants. We know dialysis and transplant are not equal treatments.



**Kidney Patient and
Donor Alliance Canada**

info@kidneyalliance.ca



Who makes up the Patient Partner Coalition?

The Patient Partner Coalition is a group of dedicated kidney patients and donors who volunteer their time to implement strategies that unite kidney patients, kidney transplant recipients, donors and potential donors and amplify their voices. Their goal is to bring about improvements to health care provided to those affected by chronic kidney disease through advocacy.



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Lisa Caswell



Brent Cheal



Brenden Cote



Charles Cook



Jamal El Ali



Alexandra Freund



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Coalition Research Support