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National Health Council Launches Kidney Health Screening Campaign in Detroit, Highlighting Critical Gap in uACR Urine Testing Among High-Risk Patients

Pilot initiative deploys patient and health care professional Trusted Messengers to drive uACR screening awareness in a city where cardiovascular and kidney disease disparities are among the most pronounced in the nation

DETROIT, MI, August 3, 2026 — The National Health Council (NHC) today announced the launch of its latest [Trusted Messengers campaign](#) in Detroit, MI. This proven patient and health care professional education initiative aims to close the significant gap in urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio (uACR) testing among adults at elevated risk for chronic kidney disease (CKD) and cardiovascular events.

Despite updated clinical guidelines from the American Heart Association, the American Diabetes Association, and Kidney Disease: Improving Global Outcomes (KDIGO) recommending routine uACR screening for patients with type 2 diabetes or hypertension, research suggests only 2 in 10 eligible patients receive the test.

“Patients and health care providers are partners in managing chronic conditions like cardiovascular disease, chronic kidney disease, diabetes, and more, but they may not know how linked these conditions are,” said Randall Rutta, Chief Executive Officer of the National Health Council. “Our fourth Trusted Messengers campaign helps bridge the knowledge gap on how a simple urine test can alert patients and providers to potential kidney damage before it is too late.”

The uACR, which is a simple urine test, checks for the presence of a protein known as albumin in the urine. If albumin is found in the urine, a condition known as albuminuria, it can be a sign of damage to kidney tissues or blood vessels. uACR testing can detect kidney damage earlier than other tests, such as the estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR) blood test, before patients experience symptoms.

Detroit was selected as the pilot market in recognition of the city's elevated burden of cardio-kidney-metabolic (CKM) disease. The Detroit metro area carries disproportionately high rates of

type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and CKD, conditions that are deeply interconnected and that, in combination, dramatically elevate mortality risk. Research indicates that patients with both CKD and cardiovascular disease face mortality rates more than double those of patients with cardiovascular disease alone. The Detroit launch marks the campaign's inaugural market.

"The uACR, urine albumin to creatinine ratio, can identify very early kidney disease — before the eGFR changes, before the creatinine changes, at a point when the cells are starting to become damaged. That is the opportunity that we have here in this test."

— **Dr. Lee Kirksey, Vascular Surgeon, Cleveland Clinic | NHC Trusted Messenger**

The campaign's core mechanism is the deployment of six Trusted Messengers: three patients with lived experience of CKD, kidney transplantation, and metabolic disease, as well as three health care professionals that include a vascular surgeon, an internal medicine/clinical pharmacist specialist, and a cardiology-focused nurse. Panel discussions with these Trusted Messengers will be distributed as video content, with supporting educational materials including an infographic and patient pocket card. The OPEN Health Patient Engagement practice provided agency support for the initiative and content.

The patient-facing pocket card provides guiding language for clinical discussions, including prompts for patients to specifically request uACR and eGFR testing, questions to ask when results are available, and language for advocating for themselves with their care team if testing is not offered. A significant portion of patients first learn of their CKD diagnosis in emergency settings, a pattern that Trusted Messenger panelists identified as both preventable and unacceptable.

"I'm getting ready to get in my vehicle, and it's like, 'Oh, Patrick, ... you're at stage 3B of end-stage renal disease, and you only have between 30% to 35% kidney function.' Not only was I speechless, but I went through the full cycle of grief."

— **Patrick Gee, Kidney Patient Advocate | NHC Trusted Messenger**

Campaign resources, including the full Trusted Messengers panel video series, the uACR patient infographic, and the patient pocket card are available at <https://nationalhealthcouncil.org/cvd-ckd-trusted-messenger/>. Health care professionals, health system administrators, and patient advocacy organizations are encouraged to share and integrate these resources into their patient education programs. This program received support from Boehringer Ingelheim.

Notes to Editors

- **uACR:** Urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio. A simple, in-office urine test that detects albumin in the urine, an early indicator of kidney damage that is often present before eGFR blood testing shows signs of kidney damage.
- **eGFR:** Estimated glomerular filtration rate. A blood-based measure of kidney filtration capacity. Declines later in disease progression than uACR.

- CKM: Cardio-kidney-metabolic. A term describing the interconnected disease system linking cardiovascular disease, chronic kidney disease, and metabolic conditions such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. Formalized by the American Heart Association in 2023.
- Panel interviews, B-roll, and high-resolution photography are available upon request. Contact [Jennifer Schleman](#) for access.

About the National Health Council

The National Health Council (NHC) unites nearly 200 national organizations—including leading patient groups, research institutions, providers, caregivers, and businesses across the health care sector — to drive patient-centered health policy. Representing 200+ million people with chronic diseases and disabilities, the NHC strengthens its members' collective influence to expand access to quality, affordable, and equitable health care. The NHC fosters collaboration across the health ecosystem to shape policies that reflect the needs of patients. For more information, visit NationalHealthCouncil.org.

About Trusted Messengers

The National Health Council Trusted Messengers campaigns highlight critical public health issues important to the patient community. The campaigns provide tools, educational resources, evidence-based research, and messaging aimed at improving the lives of patients living with chronic diseases and disabilities. Learn more at NationalHealthCouncil.org/trusted-messengers.

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