

National Kidney Month: Novartis, partners promote awareness on kidney diseases and organ donation

Jun 21, 2021

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- *Novartis unequivocally supports and sponsors ethical, legal and non-commercial efforts to promote organ donation and recruit voluntary organ donors.*

June 21, 2021 – In observance of National Kidney Month, Novartis Healthcare Philippines, the National Kidney & Transplant Institute (NKTi), and partner patient advocacy groups are promoting awareness on the burden of kidney diseases and the importance of organ donation. Presidential Decree 184 declared June as National Kidney Month in the Philippines, and mandated the NKTi to lead its annual observance in the country to promote awareness on kidney diseases and their prevention. This year's National Kidney Month theme is “*Matatag na Bato sa Kapanahunang Ito*”.

“The most common causes of kidney failure, technically known as end-stage renal disease or ESRD, are uncontrolled diabetes and hypertension, as well chronic glomerulonephritis which is an inflammation of the kidneys. Every year, about 15,000 new patients start on dialysis because of ESRD,” said Dr. Romina A. Danguilan, Deputy Executive Director for Education, Training and Research Services, NKTi.

According to Dr. Danguilan, kidney transplantation is the best treatment for ESRD. “Dialysis is just a bridge to kidney transplantation, which results in the highest quality of life and longest survival for patients with ESRD. Kidney transplant donors could either be a patient’s living relative or friend, or a brain dead or deceased individual. Unfortunately, finding a kidney transplant donor in the country is a challenge. This is why we have an advocacy to encourage Filipinos to be an organ donor and carry an organ donor card with them at all times.”

In 2016, Novartis partnered with the National Kidney and Transplant Institute (NKTi) to form the Renal Gift Allowing Life for Others (REGALO) organ donation advocacy. REGALO aims to raise awareness on organ donation and encourage Filipinos to GIVE of themselves through organ donation; CARE enough to sign up and become a willing organ donor; and to SHARE what they have done with their family and friends. REGALO is supported by the Maria Corazon Torres Y Javier (MCTJ) Foundation, Kidney Foundation of the Philippines (KFP), and Kidney Transplant Association of the Philippines (KITAP), and the Transplantation Society of the Philippines.

On June 19, 2021, Novartis Healthcare Philippines supported patient advocacy groups Psoriasis Philippines (PsorPhil), Dialysis PH, and Kidney Transplant PH in holding Weekends with PsorPhil focusing on the topic “*Ano Ba ‘to mga Kabato? Kwento ng Karanasan para Kidney Ipaglaban*”. Livestreamed on the patient advocacy groups’ social media platforms, the event featured expert and patient insights on chronic kidney disease from Dr. Russell Villanueva, adult nephrology consultant at NKTi; Reynaldo Abacan Jr. and Ciao Ricerra of Dialysis PH; and Tana Mendoza-Juan of Kidney Transplant PH.

Since 2012, Novartis has partnered with the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation to provide qualified PhilHealth members who need a kidney transplant with access to high-quality and lower-cost anti-organ rejection medicines. The PhilHealth Z Benefit Package for Kidney Transplantation enables more Filipinos with end-stage renal disease to afford the life-saving benefits of kidney transplantation and achieve better health outcomes. Novartis has for many years placed a high priority on developing medicines to protect and extend the lives of organ transplant recipients. Transplant surgeons, patients and families alike recognize the company's pioneering immunosuppressants as essential components in the "gift of life".

"Novartis unequivocally supports and sponsors ethical, legal and non-commercial efforts to promote organ donation and recruit voluntary organ donors. If you donate your organs after you die, you could save and improve the lives of many Filipinos, especially those with kidney failure," said Ms. Christine Fajardo, Corporate Affairs Head, Novartis Healthcare Philippines.

The general public is encouraged to click on <http://nkti.gov.ph/images/HOPE/Organ-Donor-Card.pdf> to download and print the Organ Donor Card or visit the REGALO Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/RegaloOrganDonationAdvocacy/>. Persons with a valid driver's license may also tick the "Organ Donor Option" at the back of the license to express their willingness to donate all their organs or just a specific organ.

About National Kidney and Transplant Institute (NKTi)

The NKTi is a tertiary medical specialty center and referral center of kidney patients from various regional hospitals in the nation. It is also recognized as the lead agency in voluntary blood services in the country.

About Maria Corazon Torres Y Javier (MCTJ) Foundation

Established in 1991, the MCTJ Foundation serves as a coordinating body for organ donors and recipients who will undergo organ transplantation. It also secures and manages donations from kind-hearted individuals and organizations in order to provide financial support to underprivileged beneficiaries.

About the Kidney Foundation of the Philippines (KFP)

The KFP was established more than 40 years ago with the primary mandate of delivering specialized health services to patients suffering from kidney and other related diseases. It established the first dialysis facility in the country and works in partnership with other hospital facilities in catering the medical needs of patients who qualify for kidney transplantation operation. It has the Kidney Care Assistance Program (KidCAP), sustained by the institution's fund-raising activities, to support dialysis and transplant patients in need of financial subsidy.

About Psoriasis Philippines (PsorPhil)

PsorPhil represents the interests of 1 to 2 million Filipinos believed to be suffering in silence with psoriasis. It is the only Filipino patient advocacy group recognized by the International Federation of Psoriasis Association and the International Psoriasis Network. Psorphil is a founding member of PsorAsia+Pacific.

About Dialysis PH

Dialysis PH Support aims to give Filipino dialysis patients a voice and support by creating harmonious relationship through education and advocacy. The group is dedicated to improving the quality of life of dialysis patients by promoting awareness on Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD).

About Kidney Transplant Association of the Philippines (KITAP)

Founded in 1985, KITAP is dedicated to uplifting the lives and protecting the rights of kidney transplant recipients, donors, and the immediate family of recipients. It currently has 1,400 members.

About Kidney Transplant PH

Kidney Transplant PH aims to increase awareness on kidney transplantation and the challenges of kidney transplant patients in living a normal life.

About Novartis

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