Extending Medicare coverage for Immunosuppressive Medication

Kidney transplant recipients must take immunosuppressive drugs for the life of their transplant, or they increase the risk of losing their kidney.

Medicare pays for the transplant but pays for the immunosuppressive drugs for 36 months post-transplant.

Coverage of these critical medications stops unless the beneficiary is Medicare-aged or Medicare-disabled. As a result, patients often face the challenge of obtaining medications required to maintain their new kidney.

Transplant recipients need these drugs to maintain their kidney and lower risk of rejection. Medicare covers immunosuppressants for only 36 months post-transplant, leaving many recipients struggling to find affordable coverage. Extending Medicare coverage for immunosuppressive medications indefinitely ensures patients have access to these lifesaving medications.

"I had to make the difficult decision to pause my status on the transplant list as I have no idea how I can continue to pay for those drugs essential to maintaining a transplant."

"Having access to affordable immunosuppressant medication is so important to my son. Now only 27 his transplanted kidney has to last—we can’t afford to have him go back on dialysis to live."

The Medicare End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) program pays for dialysis or transplantation for most of the nearly 726,000 kidney disease patients regardless of their ages.

If a transplant recipient loses the kidney, he or she has to go back on dialysis and the wait list for a kidney transplant. Nearly 95,000 people are on the wait list and nearly 3,600 people died in 2017 without receiving a kidney transplant.

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