



Community Health Report

CREATING CULTURALLY COMPETENT EDUCATION

Advancing kidney transplantation education through equitable outreach, culturally grounded care navigation, and trusted community engagement.

Houston, TX



NATIONAL
MINORITY QUALITY
FORUM



Center for
Sustainable Health Care
Quality and Equity

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KIDNEY HEALTH, TRANSPLANT, AND DONATION

BACKGROUND

Kidney transplantation stands as the optimal treatment for end-stage renal disease (ESRD), offering patients a chance at improved quality of life and longevity compared to dialysis. However, significant disparities persist in access to and outcomes of kidney transplantation, particularly among Black and Brown patients in the United States. These disparities are multifaceted, influenced by socioeconomic factors, systemic inequities in healthcare delivery, and patient education gaps.

Disparities in Kidney Transplantation

Black and Brown communities face disproportionate barriers in accessing kidney transplantation. According to recent data, Black patients are significantly less likely to receive a kidney transplant compared to their White counterparts, despite a higher prevalence of ESRD within these populations. Structural inequities contribute to delayed referrals, longer waitlisting times, and decreased access to living donor transplantation, which is associated with better outcomes.

Role of Nephrologists

Nephrologists can play a pivotal role in addressing these disparities by providing culturally competent care and facilitating education about kidney transplantation options, including living donation. Studies have shown that proactive nephrology care improves access to transplantation among underserved populations. However, there remains a need to provide nephrologists with strategies to improve their communication skills in discussing transplantation with Black and Brown patients.

The Role of Trusted Community Voices

Trusted community voices can play a crucial role in disseminating information about kidney transplantation within minoritized communities. Community leaders, patient advocates, and organizations that serve Black and Brown populations can effectively convey culturally sensitive messages, promote the benefits of transplantation and direct patients to appropriate resources. Engaging these community voices in an education campaign can increase the reach and impact of the initiative.

1. United States Renal Data System (USRDS). (2021). Annual Data Report: Epidemiology of Kidney Disease in the United States. National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Available at: <https://adr.usrds.org/2021>
2. Axelrod, D. A., et al. (2021). Access to Kidney Transplantation Among US States: Implications for the Vulnerable Populations. *American Journal of Kidney Diseases*, 78(2), 226-238. doi: 10.1053/j.ajkd.2021.01.017
3. Patzer, R. E., et al. (2021). Race and Dialysis Facility Referral: Are There Differences in Patients Who Are Referred to Transplant Centers? *American Journal of Transplantation*, 21(2), 686-696. doi: 10.1111/ajt.16559



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The initiative integrated provider education, community engagement, and culturally tailored communications to address disparities in kidney health outcomes. Key components included:

Transplant Bias Training:

NMQF engaged local nephrologists in a training developed with a kidney care and transplant expert focused on implicit bias and culturally competent transplant education. The session was delivered in person and recorded for future use.

Community Education:

Faith Health Alliance supported the development of culturally relevant training materials. Four Health Champions were trained to deliver peer-to-peer education on kidney disease prevention, transplantation, and living donation through in-person and virtual sessions.

Communications & Outreach:

NMQF developed culturally appropriate materials and supported dissemination to increase community engagement across SHC, Health Champion, and Faith Health Alliance events.

Key Outcomes

The program successfully:

- Strengthened culturally competent transplant education among nephrologists serving Black and Brown patients in Houston
- Expanded community awareness of kidney disease prevention, treatment, and transplantation
- Increased engagement around living donation and kidney transplantation
- Advanced health equity through trusted, community-based education and outreach
- Delivered a successful LinkedIn Live engagement, “Closing the Gap – Kidney Transplant Access for Communities of Color,” expanding dialogue on equitable access to transplantation



Faith Health Alliance (FHA) is a network of over 25 Black-led, Protestant churches across the U.S. Each church and its leadership serve as public health beacons for their congregants and in their communities. They participate in disseminating public health education and information, hosting screening fairs, and/or inviting trusted practitioners to educate their congregations.



The Health Champions are a network of entrepreneurs and community leaders, with a passion for health, to share key health information in their communities. Through their trusted roles, they help make communities healthier.



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DRIVING CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE TRANSPLANT CARE

Bias Training Summary: Cultural Humility Workshop

NMQF conducted a Cultural Humility and Implicit Bias Workshop for Houston Methodist transplant staff, focused on addressing bias, social determinants of health (SDoH), and culturally responsive care. The session included an Implicit Association Test, case studies, and strategy discussions to identify opportunities for improving equitable transplant care.

Key insights highlighted that disparities are driven by patient knowledge gaps, lack of trust, SDoH barriers (e.g., financial, transportation, language), and institutional practices. The training resulted in actionable recommendations to improve communication, reduce bias, and better support patients through culturally competent, patient-centered approaches.

Institutional Recommendations



- Improve translation and accessibility of patient materials.
- Strengthen patient communication across multiple channels.
- Increase use of interpreters and culturally appropriate services.
- Address SDoH barriers (e.g., financial, transportation, support needs).

Provider Recommendations

Assess and reflect on implicit bias.
Avoid labeling patients as “noncompliant.”
Use patient-centered, open-ended communication.
Consider social and cultural factors in care delivery.

SDOH CHALLENGES

We reviewed what the various types of social determinants of health are and discussed which ones patients at Houston Methodist experience. Participating staff noted the following as the primary causes of SDoH challenges among patients:

-  Financial
-  Language
-  Transportation
-  Literacy
-  Support

CAUSES OF DISPARITIES

We discussed the primary causes of disparities at Houston Methodist Transplant Center. Participants ranked each of the below on a scale of 1-10 on the extent that they caused disparities for patients:

- 7.9** Patient lack of knowledge/understanding
- 6.2** Patient lack of trust
- 4.4** Institutional policies and practices
- 4.1** Interpersonal bias from clinical staff



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LINKEDIN LIVE ENGAGEMENT: CLOSING THE GAP – KIDNEY TRANSPLANT ACCESS FOR COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

On October 8 at 2:00 PM, the National Minority Quality Forum (NMQF) hosted a LinkedIn Live session. The session featured Dr. Anthony Watkins, Surgical Director of the Kidney & Pancreas Transplant Program at Tampa General Hospital, and was moderated by Chinnie Ukachukwu, MPH. **The session brought together health equity advocates, clinicians, policy influencers, and community stakeholders to discuss disparities in kidney transplant access and strategies to improve equity in care.**

The session focused on increasing awareness of chronic kidney disease, highlighting inequities in transplant access, and educating participants on the transplant journey, living donation, and community-driven solutions to improve outcomes.

Overall, the LinkedIn Live event successfully elevated awareness of kidney transplant disparities, engaged a diverse audience, and highlighted the importance of leveraging multiple platforms to advance equitable, community-centered health education and access to care.

Highlights

- ~50 live attendees and 100+ unique event visits
- 3,121 impressions across LinkedIn
- 64 LinkedIn engagements, including 26 reactions, 30 comments, and 8 reposts
- 150 unique viewers reached
- 255 LinkedIn video views
- 253 YouTube views following recording upload



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MODULE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING OVERVIEW

FHA collaborated with subject matter expert Dr. Jason Cobb (Nephrologist) to develop an educational training module focused on kidney transplantation and donation, with additional CKD content to provide a broader understanding of the care continuum.

Training topics included:

- **Transplantation and Donation (primary focus):** types of donation (living and deceased), common misconceptions, patient and donor resources, life after transplant, and donor experience, recovery, and long-term considerations
- **CKD Overview:** testing, early detection, symptoms, prevention, and risk factors
- **Treatment Pathways:** medication, dialysis, and transplantation
- **Health Disparities:** eGFR race-based calculations
- **Best Practices:** supportive, culturally responsive communication
- **Advocacy and Education Resources:** tools for community engagement and outreach

The training was attended by approximately 50 FHA and HC participants.

A take-away resource was developed to support community partners in promoting kidney health, transplant awareness, and donation.

KIDNEY HEALTH, TRANSPLANT, AND DONATION

LET'S TALK KIDNEY TRANSPLANT

A kidney transplant is a surgery where a healthy kidney is put into someone whose kidneys no longer work.

Why Transplants Matter

- Often the **best treatment** for kidney failure
- Can help people **live longer** with **fewer side effects**
- Some people may need **more than one transplant** in life
- Offers more **freedom** than dialysis and more **natural kidney function** in comparison to dialysis

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT KIDNEY DONATION

- Donating is a **big personal choice**. Talk with people you trust.
- You can **change your mind** anytime—even if you're approved.
- **You can live a full life with one kidney.**
- **Hospital stay** is usually just 1-2 nights.
- **Screening is free** of cost to the donor - Your recipient's insurance pays for the medical costs related to donation, like tests, surgery, and follow-up visits.
- **Scar Size:** The scar is usually about 2 to 5 inches long, about the size of a playing card or credit card.

QUICK FACTS

Myth: If you're not a match for your loved one, you can't help.
Fact: You can still help through a kidney swap or donor chain.

• In a kidney swap, two or more pairs of donors and recipients "trade" kidneys so everyone gets a match.

Myth: You have to be in Stage 5 CKD to get on the transplant list.
Fact: You can be listed in Stage 4 or 5 – you don't have to wait until your kidneys completely fail.

Myth: Donating a kidney will stop you from having kids or living a normal life.
Fact: Donors can still have children, work, exercise, and live full lives. The hospital stay is usually only about 2 days.

Myth: If you donate a kidney, you will have to take medicine for the rest of your life.
Fact: Only the person who gets the kidney takes medicine every day to keep their body from rejecting it. Donors do not need life-long medicine.

Myth: Myth: You can only donate a kidney to someone with the same skin color.
Fact: Skin color doesn't matter—your blood type and tissue match are what's important.

FIND SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Kidney donation and transplant can bring extra costs and challenges. These resources support donors and recipients with:

- **Help** for travel, child care, and lost wages
- **Peer support** from past donors and recipients
- **Key questions** to ask before donating
- Info on **transplant equity and access** to care
- **Badge of Honor (Houston)** – donor stories, tools, and guidance

SCAN HERE



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HEALTH CHAMPION COMMUNITY IMPACT AND OUTREACH

The initiative contributed to increased awareness of kidney disease prevention and treatment, greater consideration of kidney transplantation and living donation, and progress toward advancing health equity through community-based engagement.

In the Houston area, four Health Champions were trained using the developed module and implemented outreach activities within their communities.

Collectively, they conducted and participated in approximately 10 community events, reaching an estimated 200 individuals. Outreach activities included tabling at community events, facilitating educational sessions in community-based settings, and engaging faith-based audiences through church events and Bible study discussions.

As a result of these efforts, community members were provided with culturally relevant, evidence-based information, supporting increased knowledge and informed decision-making related to kidney health, transplantation, and donation.

Qualitative feedback

Several Champions reported encountering individuals who expressed hesitation or distrust toward kidney transplantation. Through active listening, respectful dialogue, and the provision of accurate information, Champions were able to address concerns, dispel misconceptions, and facilitate more informed conversations about transplantation and donation, including the importance of addressing disparities.

Health Champions also noted the role of community trust in fostering open dialogue. In one instance, engagement within a church setting led a community member with a history of kidney transplantation to share her personal experience, helping to normalize discussions around transplant and chronic illness.

In another case, a Health Champion was able to support a family friend who had recently been recommended for a kidney transplant by providing information, reassurance, and advocacy, demonstrating the extended impact of the training beyond formal outreach settings.

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IMPACT AT A GLANCE

This initiative demonstrated strong engagement across provider, community, and digital platforms, advancing kidney health education and equity.

Project Reach & Engagement:

Training & Capacity Building

30+ Clinical staff trained through a provider-focused Cultural Humility and Implicit Bias workshop for transplant care teams

50 Community partners trained on kidney health, transplantation, and donation

4 Health Champions in Houston, TX, serving as trusted messengers

Community Outreach & Engagement

10 Community events supported through outreach and tabling

20+ Participants engaged in hands-on advocacy training activity (Kidney Chain Donation Match Game)

25 Faith Health Alliance churches represented nationally

200 Community members reached

LinkedIn Impact

3,100 Impressions across LinkedIn

500+ Combined video views across LinkedIn and YouTube



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ADVOCACY IN ACTION

The Faith Health Alliance & Health Champions Advocacy Training Workshop (September 24–25, 2025, Upper Marlboro, MD), hosted by NMQF/SHC in partnership with Ark Church, convened faith leaders, health champions, and policy experts to strengthen community-driven advocacy for health equity. Building on prior kidney health and living donation education, the workshop connected clinical knowledge to real-world advocacy. Through case-based discussions and interactive learning, participants explored strategies to effectively communicate, mobilize their communities, and address barriers to care. The training reinforced the power of trusted community voices in advancing equitable kidney health outcomes, and many participants left prepared to implement these approaches within their own congregations and communities.

Kidney Chain Donation Activity

Over 20 participants engaged in an interactive “Kidney Chain Donation Match Game,” illustrating how living donor chains and paired exchanges expand access to transplantation. Participants worked through real-world scenarios reflecting common barriers such as donor mismatch, financial challenges, and delays in care.

Through collaborative matching, the activity demonstrated how one altruistic donor can initiate a chain of transplants while highlighting disparities in access. It reinforced prior kidney education and strengthened participants’ ability to connect these concepts to advocacy. Many attendees expressed interest in implementing the activity within their own churches and communities.

Altruistic Donor You are 28 years old. While driving, you hear a caller on the radio asking for a kidney donor for their grandchild. At church, you learned that Black/African Americans often have a harder time finding donors. You get screened, and you are a match. You donate altruistically and start a kidney donation chain.	Your Match: 	
1- You are 33 years old and living with lupus. Your lupus has advanced and is now affecting your kidneys, so your doctor recommends a transplant. Your family is not a match, but they share your story on the radio, hoping someone will come forward. Their efforts pay off – someone is screened and is a match. You receive a kidney through this altruistic donation, and your sibling helps continue a kidney donation chain.	Your Match: 	Sibling Match: 



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COMMUNITY IMPACT STORIES

Community stories highlighted how education and trusted partnerships translated into real-world advocacy, outreach, and support.

Training Put Into Action

Berlinda Franklin, a Health Champion in Houston, shared how the training and resources provided through this initiative directly supported a real-life community need. While at work, she learned of an individual in Houston in need of a kidney transplant whose potential donor lived in California. Drawing from the training, she was able to provide guidance and resources related to transplantation logistics and financial assistance for donor recovery support. She later shared that the information from the training became immediately useful in helping her navigate the conversation and connect the family to relevant support and resources.

Faith-Based Leadership in Action

Ms. Vivian Clark Armstead of Trinity Baptist Church in South Carolina has become a certified kidney coach after years of dedicated partnership with the American Kidney Fund. Through her leadership, she has educated her congregation and surrounding communities about kidney health, prevention, transplantation, and organ donation. Her continued commitment to advocacy and outreach reflects the power of trusted community voices in increasing awareness, reducing stigma, and empowering individuals with life-saving knowledge and resources.

In addition to Ms. Armstead's leadership, several Faith Health Alliance churches and Health Champions have hosted educational events, discussions, and outreach activities within their congregations and communities, helping to expand awareness of kidney health, transplantation, and donation through trusted, community-based engagement.

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LOOKING AHEAD: SCALING IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Strong engagement and enthusiasm around kidney health, transplantation, and advocacy underscore the relevance and value of this initiative. This initial phase successfully focused on developing culturally responsive educational content and delivering targeted training to equip faith leaders and health champions as trusted messengers.

Building on this foundation, there is a clear opportunity to expand the reach and impact of this work. Future efforts will focus on scaling dissemination, deepening community partnerships, and supporting local implementation to ensure sustained engagement.

Future Focus Areas

- Expanding faith-based kidney health education nationally
- Increasing awareness of living donation and transplantation
- Strengthening partnerships with healthcare, public health, and advocacy organizations
- Supporting trained leaders in implementing community-based outreach and education efforts

This initiative demonstrated the value of pairing culturally responsive education with trusted community engagement to address barriers to equitable transplant access.

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