

Dr. Burgess Weekly Video Address March 31, 2013

“Protecting Kidney Transplant Recipients”

Hello this is your Congressman Michael Burgess. Each year, about 11,000 kidney transplant recipients die or return to dialysis following the failure of a transplanted kidney. After receiving a transplant, patients are faced with a long road of taking medication that will help their bodies not reject the transplanted organ.

Since 1972, Medicare has covered patients with irreversible kidney failure. While there is no Medicare time limit for a dialysis patient, kidney transplant recipients lose their Medicare coverage 36 months after they receive their transplant. It is incredibly cruel that the gravest threat to patients who have received a transplant is the federal government mandating that they can no longer receive treatment. Without these anti-rejection drugs, transplant patients are at risk to lose their transplanted kidneys – and that should never happen.

Extending immunosuppressive coverage beyond the 36 month limit would decrease the risk of organ failure. In addition, transplant recipients have a higher quality of life, and are more likely to return to employment than dialysis patients.

That’s why is why I have introduced the Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act with Congressman Ron Kind of Wisconsin. This legislation would allow individuals who are eligible for immunosuppressive drugs under Medicare Part B to continue to receive their vital treatment past the 36 month cutoff.

Renal transplantation offers end stage renal disease patients an alternative to a lifetime of dialysis. We need to ensure that patients who receive the care they need and are not subject to the federal policy that denies coverage for anti-rejection drugs after a very arbitrary time limit.

What is the result of not changing this policy? Patients face the potential issue of their transplanted kidney having complications and the return to dialysis, and Medicare foots the bill for all of this.

Thank you for taking the time to listen. For more information on legislative issues before the United States Congress, please visit my website, burgess.house.gov. May God bless you and your family - and as always, may God bless Texas.