

ASN Executive Vice President's Update

Highlighting 13 of ASN's Accomplishments in 2024

By Tod Ibrahim



Considered “the brisk philosopher of merchandising,” Elmer Wheeler (1903–1968) spent his career advising “merchants how to win sales and influence customers” (1). His first piece of marketing advice was, “Don’t sell the steak—sell the sizzle,” because “The sizzle has sold more steaks than the cow ever has, although the cow is, of course, mighty important.” Recognizing the many different “cuts of beef,” this editorial describes 13 of ASN’s prime achievements in 2024.

To promote “high-quality, person-directed care across the spectrum of kidney health and diseases spanning the kidney care journey from screening and early detection to diagnosis, treatment, and palliative care,” the society produced the first **ASN Kidney Health**

Guidance (2). In *Management of Obesity in Persons Living with Kidney Diseases*, ASN encourages nephrologists to gain knowledge about the tools and interventions available to help adults with obesity and kidney diseases safely lose weight to improve kidney and metabolic health and overall quality of life. The guidance “provides kidney health professionals with knowledge on the existing tools for obesity management and guidance on implementation of these tools within clinical practice based on best available evidence and expert opinion” (3).

Spurred by recommendations from the ASN Task Force on Augmented Intelligence and Digital Health, the **ASN Partnership for Responsible Augmented Intelligence in Kidney Health** launched. As health care adapts to the use of artificial intelligence (AI), and medical specialty societies learn how best to support their members, this initiative advances understanding of AI, machine learning, and generative AI by focusing on clinical domains, such as acute kidney injury, chronic kidney disease, dialysis, and transplantation. The Partnership for Responsible Augmented Intelligence supports patient care, drives research, stimulates innovation, and educates the nephrology workforce.

As a result of advocacy by ASN and other members of the kidney community, the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) designated “chronic renal failure” as an immunocompromising condition**, a determination that offers Americans with kidney failure earlier access to life-saving vaccines (4). Since 2016, ASN has collaborated with CDC to improve care for people living with kidney diseases, including through advancing infection-prevention practices, promoting best practices in vascular access, and educating nephrology fellows on the value of home therapies as a treatment option.

Following several legislative and regulatory successes that are advancing kidney health in the United States, ASN initiated **Transforming Kidney Health Research**. In partnership with the American Association of Kidney Patients, the American Kidney Fund, the American Society of Pediatric Nephrology, and the National Kidney Foundation (NKF), a Blue-Ribbon Panel is developing a bold, comprehensive research plan. To accelerate innovation that will deliver better diagnostics, therapies, and tools for preventing and treating kidney diseases, this community-wide plan will:

- ▶ Identify existing and emerging areas of opportunity for kidney research across the entire federal government.
- ▶ Develop federal appropriations recommendations to fund these opportunities.
- ▶ Become a pillar for the kidney community to advocate for a major increase in federal appropriations over fiscal years 2026–2028.

Similar efforts in other specialties increased federal research appropriations significantly, including by more than \$3 billion from the National Institutes of Health to research type 1 diabetes (5).

During the American Nephrology Nurses Association (ANNA) 2024 Nephrology Nursing Summit, ASN cofacilitated a session—“Navigating Challenges Together: A Panel Discussion on **Kidney Care Workforce Solutions**”—with ANNA. This session was an important part of a broader effort to strengthen the nephrology workforce, starting with the dialysis care team in the United States (6). Additionally, ASN joined forces with the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American College of Emergency Physicians to lead a plenary discussion, “Physician Workforce Challenges, Strategies, and Future Opportunities for Specialty Societies,” at the Council of Medical Specialty Societies (CMSS) Annual Meeting.

To produce the **Diagnostic Excellence: Estimated Glomerular Filtration Rate (eGFR) Toolkit**, ASN was one of 18 societies selected to participate in the CMSS Promoting Diagnostic Excellence Across Medicine program. Funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and The John A. Hartford Foundation, this program focuses on “diagnostic safety, quality, and equity” (7). In an effort to reduce disparities in diagnosis and in equitable access to care, ASN’s toolkit informs the broader health community of the importance of removal of race from the eGFR calculation. The toolkit explains what the changes are, why they were made, and what they mean. Easily accessible, downloadable, and printable, the toolkit is a “one-stop shop” with needed resources, links to important information, and answers to frequently asked questions.

Additionally, *Time* selected Cynthia Delgado, MD, FASN, and Neil R. Powe, MD, FASN—who cochaired the NKF-ASN Task Force on Reassessing the Inclusion of Race in Diagnosing Kidney Diseases—as two of the 100 “most influential people in health in 2024” for spearheading efforts to remove race from clinical algorithms (8). Ziyad Al-Aly, MD, FASN, also made the list for “detailing the numerous organ systems affected by Long COVID, the risks posed by multiple COVID-19 infections, and how Long COVID compares with chronic symptoms of viruses like the flu.”

Funded by a grant from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, ASN originated **Fostering Inclusivity in Dialysis (FinD)**, a groundbreaking leadership training program. To produce future generations of leaders regardless of their current level of practice, FinD focuses on dialysis access—particularly to improve outcomes and experience for people who are living with kidney diseases who are impacted by health care disparities—and offers yearlong leadership training, career-specific mentoring, and networking experience for early career nephrologists, including those who are in fellowship training.

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With support from Amgen; Otsuka; Travere Therapeutics, Inc.; and Vera Therapeutics, Inc., ASN introduced the **Glomerular Diseases Collaborative (GD-C)**. GD-C promotes high-quality care for people living with glomerular diseases and stimulates opportunities to address gaps in knowledge, training, continuing education, and awareness across the spectrum of glomerular diseases. To close these gaps, GD-C improves access to care; increases nephrologists’ clinical knowledge, including those who specialize in glomerular diseases; enhances access to clinical trials, which includes engaging people living with kidney diseases, informing nephrologists, and strengthening the infrastructure; and conducts economic analyses.

As part of the We’re United 4 Kidney Health campaign, ASN committed to “**transform transplant and increase access to donor kidneys**” (9). Continuing to honor this promise, ASN:

- ▶ advocated successfully for the largest funding increase ever (\$23 million) to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to carry out the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network Modernization Initiative, implementing a new law to overhaul the transplant system that ASN championed in 2023;
- ▶ shaped the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Increasing Organ Transplant Access Model;
- ▶ partnered with the American Society of Transplantation (AST) to apply for Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) accreditation for transplant nephrology (at press time, ACGME was considering the ASN-AST proposal);
- ▶ convinced CMS and HRSA to collect information about what happens between when a nephrologist refers a patient for transplant and when the patient is added (or not added) to the waitlist; and
- ▶ worked with NKF to ensure that race was removed from the Kidney Donor Risk Index.

Suzanne Watnick, MD, FASN, is serving as the inaugural **ASN Health Policy Scholar in Residence**. In piloting this unique approach to increasing nephrology’s presence within the federal government, Watnick works directly with the society’s members, leadership, and staff to further federal legislative and regulatory efforts to ensure excellence in kidney care, increase federal funding for kidney research, and bolster the nephrology workforce. To increase the federal government’s commitment to kidney health, she also serves as ASN’s point of contact to the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through the Kidney Innovation Accelerator (KidneyX), a public-private partnership between HHS and ASN “to accelerate innovation in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of kidney diseases” (10).

An **aligned editorial structure now exists** for the *Journal of the American Society of Nephrology (JASN)*, the *Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology (CJASN)*, and *Kidney360*. On January 1, 2024, Rajnish Mehrotra, MD, MS, FASN, started his term as the seventh *JASN* editor-in-chief (EIC); Connie Rhee, MD, MSc, started her term as the fourth *CJASN* EIC; and Michael Allon, MD, started his fifth year as the founding EIC of *Kidney360*. Under the new editorial structure, Mehrotra is also the inaugural senior EIC of the ASN Portfolio of Journals, and the three EICs are “working together to further enhance the author experience by providing clarity regarding the scope of each journal, a simplified submission process, and a process of seamless transfer between journals such that we continue to attract the best kidney-related research from around the world to the ASN journals” (11).

In June, ASN hosted the first **Kidney Innovation Conference**, which brought together the Kidney Health Initiative, KidneyX, and KidneyCure communities. Including keynote addresses stressing the need to accelerate innovation for people living with kidney failure, this cutting-edge meeting included presentations by patients and patient advocates, insights into the ethical and legal considerations for xenotransplantation and other emerging therapies, perspectives on AI and digital health, discussions about real-world evidence and clinical trials, suggestions for integrating health equity into innovations, and a poster session to showcase the research of KidneyCure grant recipients. Between a bipartisan panel of members of Congress and focused discussion with CMS on “Maximizing Reimbursement Pathways for New Kidney Drugs, Devices, and Biologics,” the conference also tackled myriad political realities.

As the world’s premier nephrology meeting, **ASN Kidney Week will add new features in 2024**. Implementing recommendations from the ASN Late-Breaking Clinical Trials Task Force, these additions will include multiple sessions to highlight late-breaking clinical trials, more presentation time for high-impact kidney research, and increased collaboration with *JASN*, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and *The New England Journal of Medicine*. Besides emphasizing exciting science throughout the meeting, ASN strives to ensure that the breakthroughs presented at Kidney Week extend beyond the more than 12,000 people convening in San Diego, CA. Mark your calendars because ASN Kidney Week 2025 will take place Wednesday, November 5, through Sunday, November 9, in Houston, TX.

The best way for ASN to engage its more than 21,000 members—and the broader kidney community, including people living with kidney diseases—is to pursue practical, purposeful, and powerful initiatives that will advance the field. As illustrated in the Table, these 13 selected accomplishments are engaging more than 350 volunteers.

In total, an estimated 1000 members (and other key constituents, such as people living with kidney diseases) contribute to ASN’s success by serving on the society’s committees, work groups, task forces, and other panels. The society’s leadership, staff, and I thank each of them for serving. We encourage you to email operations@asn-online.org if you are interested in volunteering to help ASN achieve its vision of “A world without kidney diseases” (12). ■

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Table. More than 350 member volunteers contributed to 13 selected accomplishments

Accomplishment	Chair/leader	Members ^a
ASN Kidney Health Guidance (KHG)	K. Lui	17
KHG Oversight Committee	T. Ikizler	18
KHG Obesity and Kidney Diseases Workgroup	H. Kramer	
ASN Partnership for Responsible Augmented Intelligence in Kidney Health	N. Tangri	6
Steering Committee		
CDC: “Chronic renal failure” is an immunocompromising condition.	K. Bryant	21
Nephrologists Transforming Dialysis Safety Project Committee		
Transforming Kidney Health Research Blue-Ribbon Panel research plan	S. Parikh	10
Kidney Care Workforce Solutions	R. Hoover	24
ASN Workforce and Training Committee		
Diagnostic Excellence: eGFR Toolkit	C. Gadegbeku	9
Diagnostic Excellence: eGFR Toolkit Steering Committee		
Fostering Inclusivity in Dialysis (FinD)	C. Delgado	
FinD Steering Committee		12
FinD Mentors and Advisers		30
Glomerular Diseases Collaborative (GD-C)	K. Gibson	8
GD-C Steering Committee		
Transform transplant and increase access to donor kidneys.	M. Josephson	10
ASN Transplant Workgroup		
ASN Health Policy Scholar in Residence	S. Watnick	62
ASN Health Care Justice Committee	R. Bignall	
ASN Policy and Advocacy Committee	R. Mannon	
ASN Quality Committee	M. Mendu	
Aligned editorial structure now exists.	R. Mehrotra	48
Editorial boards for <i>JASN</i> , <i>CJASN</i> , and <i>Kidney360</i>	C. Rhee	
	M. Allon	
Kidney Innovation Conference	U. Patel	47
Kidney Health Initiative Board of Directors	B. Kone	
KidneyCure Grants Review Committee	A. Pozzi	
ASN Kidney Week 2024 added new features in 2024.	R. Gbadegesin	
ASN Kidney Week Education Committee	T. Isakova	34
Total	23	356

^aIncludes people living with kidney diseases and interns (usually nephrology fellows) who serve on the society’s committees, work groups, task forces, and other panels.