Dear Colleagues:

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a growing epidemic. According to a study published in the November 7, 2007 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA, 2007;298 (17):2038-2047), the prevalence of CKD in America is increasing dramatically. The study estimates that 26 million people, or 13 percent of the adult US population, now have some evidence of CKD; a rise of 3 percent over previous estimates.

The increase is partly explained by the increasing prevalence of obesity, diabetes and hypertension, the main causes of CKD. It is estimated that less than one fifth of those with CKD are aware of their condition. CKD confers not only significant risk of progressing to end stage kidney failure, but it is also associated with a significantly higher risk of cardiovascular morbidity and mortality.

Serum creatinine concentration is the usual means of assessing kidney function. However, the creatinine concentration in isolation has a complicated non-linear relationship to kidney function measured as glomerular filtration rate (GFR). This situation may lead to inadequate recognition of CKD, especially in the elderly. Such failure to adequately detect CKD by GFR may result in patients not receiving appropriate medications to slow the decline in GFR or the progression of CKD. This failure also imperils patient safety due to misdosing of nephrotoxic medications.

Recently, data from the Modification of Diet in Renal Disease (MDRD) study confirmed the usefulness of a formula for estimating glomerular filtration rate (eGFR) in adult patients. In spite of some limitations, this formula is a significant improvement over reporting serum creatinine concentration alone for assessing kidney function. The MDRD formula is presently used in the majority of teaching hospitals in the US to report an estimated GFR.

We are asking you to join us in facilitating the reporting of eGFR by all hospital and commercial clinical laboratories in the United States as recommended by the National Kidney Disease Education Program (NKDEP). Clinical laboratories are crucial partners in the successful implementation of this effort to insure your patients benefit from this important advance.

Thank you for helping us to ensure the best care for your patients and for your assistance in enhancing the awareness of this growing public health threat.

Additional information on the eGFR can be found at the following URL:
http://nkdep.nih.gov/labprofessionals/index.htm

Sincerely,

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