



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **CANADIANS UNDERESTIMATE THE REAL IMPACT OF KIDNEY DISEASE**

### ***MORE INFORMATION NEEDED TO ADDRESS ENORMOUS IMPACT***

**May 18, 2004** (Hamilton, Ontario) - Today, **The Kidney Foundation of Canada** released the results of a national survey on key questions related to kidney disease. The random telephone survey of 1,000 Canadians by **SES Research** of Ottawa this past April asked respondents about their perceptions of kidney disease and its incidence in the population.

“The survey results highlight a critical gap between Canadians’ perceptions of kidney disease and its real impact on individuals, families and the health care system,” stated Brenda Szabo, Executive Director of the Greater Ontario Branch of The Kidney Foundation – the sponsor of the survey.

Canadians were asked to rank for importance their top three of a group of five chronic diseases. The responses for the most important health issue were: Heart disease 55%; Breast Cancer 21%; Alzheimer’s 10%; Prostate Cancer 6%; Arthritis 5%; - and Kidney Disease 3%. Only 22% of respondents rated kidney disease among the top three issues.

“These results confirm the need to inform Canadians about kidney disease - which is a life threatening disease that has no cure and requires significant treatment costs for a relatively small, but rapidly growing group of Canadians that suffer from kidney failure so severe that they require dialysis or a kidney transplant,” stated Dr. Catherine Clase, MB, BChir, MSc, FRCPC, a nephrologist, associate professor at McMaster University and Medical Director of the Kidney Function Program at St. Joseph’s Healthcare in Hamilton, Ontario.

“Reliable estimates project that dialysis treatment and care of persons who have received a kidney transplant – approximately 30,000 people - costs our health care system up to \$2 billion dollars annually,” Dr. Clase added. “It is critical to remember that the growth rate of people newly diagnosed with the most severe state of kidney disease, i.e., those requiring dialysis or transplantation, is 10% - a significantly higher rate of growth than our economy – the source of the public health dollars that must pay for this treatment.”

“It’s crucial that Canadians better understand the debilitating nature of severe kidney disease, the intrusiveness of dialysis on one’s quality of life, the dramatically reduced life expectancy of people impacted by kidney disease and the disproportionately high costs of treating this disease.”

In another part of the survey, Canadians were asked if they suffered from any kind of kidney disease - 3 percent of respondents identified themselves as having kidney disease.

Dr. Clase observed, “This response is stimulating but in reality we don’t know what Canadians understand by kidney disease - or how many Canadians actually suffer from this disease. We

know that low kidney function increases the risk of heart attack, stroke and the need for future dialysis but we don't know the best way to detect people most at risk nor how best to treat them."

"Research is vital to both develop effective and cost effective prevention and treatment strategies – and to make an evidence-based case for funding these strategies with a much improved understanding of their likely implementation costs. The Kidney Foundation is funding research that addresses the fundamental question of how many Canadians have low kidney function. Further research, however, is needed into developing and testing strategies to find and treat patients with low kidney function," stated Dr. Clase.

"Health conditions such as high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes are now considered by many medical experts to be reaching crisis levels in the Canadian population. These conditions are amongst the leading causes of kidney disease. Canadians must recognize the significance of both kidney failure and the impact of dialysis. Failure to do so holds enormous consequences for peoples' health and quality of life as well as the financial condition of Canada's health care system."

Since 1964, The Kidney Foundation of Canada has dedicated its efforts to ease the burden of those impacted by kidney disease. This survey is the first in what is planned as a bi-annual look at issues related to kidney disease and how it impacts Canadians and the health care system.

"The incidence rate of kidney disease and the very high – and escalating costs – of treating kidney disease is a matter of national importance for Canadians, health care system leaders and health care policy makers," said Brenda Szabo of the Greater Ontario Branch. "Building awareness of this disease is the first step in closing this critical gap in understanding."

- 30 -

With its national office in Montreal, **The Kidney Foundation of Canada** has 13 branches and 52 chapters located in every major city in Canada that execute its mandate in research, patient services, education, advocacy and organ donation.

The **Greater Ontario Branch of The Kidney Foundation of Canada** is located in Hamilton, Ontario where through its branch and local chapter staff, it works with 25,000 volunteers to alleviate the burden of kidney disease.

**Methodological Note:** The research was part of **SES Research's National Omnibus Survey** which is conducted every three months. It is based on a random telephone sample of 1,000 Canadians, 18 years of age and older and was conducted between April 20<sup>th</sup> and April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004. The margin of accuracy for the aggregate survey results is 3.1 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20. Validation of the demographic profile of respondents indicates that the poll is a fair representation of the Canadian populace. The survey was registered with the Canadian Survey Research Council of which SES is a member.

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