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May 22, 2007

Ministry of Community and Social Services  
Minister Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social services  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hepburn  
80 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9 Fax 416-325-5191

Dear Minister Meilleur,

Re: ODSP – Mandatory Special Necessities (Qualifying Items)

We are Registered Social Workers in Ontario who are members of the Canadian Association of Nephrology Social Workers (CANSW). The CANSW membership is dedicated to assisting individuals with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) access quality care and services. More specifically, we are writing to seek clarification on funding for the purchase of items necessary to support patients in the delivery of self-administered Peritoneal Dialysis (PD). As a National Association, we are concerned that the MSN Program is not delivered consistently in each community resulting in applications for medical items being approved for some individuals and not for others.

Individuals living with end stage renal failure rely on life support dialysis treatment. End Stage Renal Failure (ESRF) is a life threatening condition. A person with ESRF has less than 10% of normal kidney function. As a result, waste by-products and fluids that would normally be filtered with healthy kidneys are no longer removed from the body. When these toxins build up in the person's body, it can cause significant health problems such as heart failure, swelling, shortness of breath, decreased energy and stamina, nausea and physical distress. Left untreated, this illness will result in death.

Renal replacement therapy, or what is referred to as dialysis, treats ESRF. One of the dialysis treatments available to individuals with ESRF is peritoneal dialysis (PD). PD is a treatment performed at home, after the patient and their caregiver(s) have received education by the hospital renal service. PD removes the waste products and excess fluid from the body by filtering the person's blood over a semi permeable membrane, the peritoneum. In this treatment, the peritoneum is the artificial kidney. The peritoneum is the lining of the abdominal cavity. PD requires a peritoneal catheter to be placed into the patient's abdomen by their kidney doctor. Special dialysis solution can be instilled into the abdominal cavity via the dialysis catheter. Waste

products and excess fluid are removed from the blood through the peritoneum into the dialysis solution. After a period of time this fluid is drained out of the abdominal cavity and replaced with fresh dialysis solution. This type of dialysis requires the patient or their caregivers to manually fill and drain the abdominal cavity with the dialysis fluid. The exchange of fluids must be performed 4 to 5 times per day. Each treatment takes approximately 45 minutes to perform, depending on the individual.

Individuals who assume the task of PD are required to purchase the following items: digital BP monitor, digital thermometer, X-Large electric heating pad, monthly supply of anti-bacterial liquid soap. The average cost is (\$250.00 initially plus soap costs each month). These items are not subsidized by any other government source. As you are aware, individual's living on ODSP/OWP are not in a financial position to afford such expense.

The review of the MSN policy in relation to equipment necessary for dialysis life support treatment is of utmost importance. The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care has formed a Provincial Peritoneal Dialysis Task Force whose recommendations are to increase the numbers of PD patients to 30% over the next couple of years. Given that these supplies are necessary to perform PD, it is essential that the Ministry of Community and Social Services' policies be congruent to support those of the Ministry of Health for the well being of our patients.

We look forward to a reply to our concerns.

Sincerely,

Lisa Ben, MSW, RSW,  
CANSW Southern Ontario Representative  
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cc: Ministry of Community and Social Services, Regional Offices

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Ministry of Health and Long Term Care

Ethel Doyle, Project Manager  
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Janet Bick, Government and Professional Relations  
Kidney Foundation of Canada, Central Ontario Branch

Mary Floro-White, Ontario Government Relations Coordinator  
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Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario