



Ardelyx Announces the First Recipients of Derek Forfang Patient Advocate Award

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Award established to recognize leaders in the field of chronic kidney disease advocacy

WALTHAM, Mass., March 13, 2025 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Ardelyx, Inc. (Nasdaq: ARDX), a biopharmaceutical company founded with a mission to discover, develop and commercialize innovative, first-in-class medicines that meet significant unmet medical needs, is proud to announce on World Kidney Day that Mary Baliker, Erich Ditschman, Nichole Jefferson, Curtis Warfield and David M. White are the first recipients of the Derek Forfang Patient Advocate Award.

This award was established to honor Derek Forfang, who suffered from chronic kidney disease (CKD) and passed away due to issues related to his disease in 2023. Derek worked tirelessly to improve the lives of patients, families and caregivers in the CKD community. Candidates for the award were nominated by the community at large, with the recipients selected by Ardelyx's Derek Forfang Patient Advisory Council based on their achievements and contributions to advocate for patients who suffer with CKD.

"Ardelyx is honored to recognize Mary, Erich, Nichole, Curtis and David as the first-ever recipients of the Derek Forfang Patient Advocate Award. These awardees are tireless champions for patients and are a great inspiration," said Dr. Alan Ryan, Senior Director of Patient Advocacy at Ardelyx. "Like Derek, these individuals are committed to raising awareness of the challenges kidney patients face, and use their experience, their voice and their platform to advocate for the community."

Recipients of the Derek Forfang Patient Advocate Award will be honored during a reception at the upcoming National Kidney Foundation (NKF) Spring Clinical Meetings.

Learn more about each of the recipients:

Mary Baliker has been a dedicated healthcare advocate for the past 40 years, and is involved in several kidney initiatives regionally, nationally and globally. Mary was diagnosed with a rare kidney disease at the age of nine and since then has undergone hemodialysis and received four kidney transplants. As a result of this life-long journey, Mary cherishes her life and possesses a strong desire to help improve the healthcare experience, health outcomes and quality of life for patients with kidney disease. In addition to publishing multiple peer reviewed articles related to the kidney patient experience, Mary is the author of *Maria Never Gives Up*, a story written to help children and families facing chronic illnesses. Her book is distributed across transplant and dialysis centers nationwide and is available for purchase online.

Erich Ditschman was a lifelong advocate for kidney patients, dedicating his time to mentorship, policy change and home dialysis education before his passing on New Year's Day 2025. Erich worked tirelessly to empower patients, advance kidney care research and influence healthcare policies, including being a local leader in Michigan since 2002. He dedicated hundreds of hours to educating in-center dialysis patients about home dialysis, kidney transplants and palliative care. Erich co-founded one of the first home hemodialysis databases, which ultimately contributed to the founding of Home Dialyzors United.

Nichole Jefferson is a kidney transplant recipient and patient advocate dedicated to health equity, early detection and patient empowerment. Recognizing that transplantation is a treatment, not a cure, Nichole became a fierce advocate for underserved communities, policy change and patient education. As a mentor, speaker and leader, Nichole works to advance home dialysis and systemic kidney healthcare improvements.

Curtis Warfield is a kidney transplant recipient and advocate for health equity, policy reform and patient education. Diagnosed with focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS) in 2012, Curtis received a kidney transplant in 2016 and has since worked to ensure patient voices shape kidney care policies. He advocates on Capitol Hill and in his home state of Indiana and serves on key task forces and research panels. Curtis has been recognized for his efforts with the 2021 NKF Celeste Castillo Lee Patient Engagement Award and 2019 NKF of Indiana Patient Volunteer Award.

David M. (Dave) White is a grateful kidney transplant recipient and patient engagement leader focused on health equity, patient empowerment and systemic kidney care reform. Dave actively collaborates with government agencies, research groups and quality improvement organizations to ensure patients' voices shape healthcare decisions, championing policy change to improve outcomes for the CKD community.

About Ardelyx

Ardelyx was founded with a mission to discover, develop and commercialize innovative, first-in-class medicines that meet significant unmet medical needs. Ardelyx has two commercial products approved in the United States, IBSRELA[®] (tenapanor) and XPHOZAH[®] (tenapanor). Ardelyx has agreements for the development and commercialization of tenapanor outside of the U.S. Kyowa Kirin commercializes PHOZEVEL[®] (tenapanor) for hyperphosphatemia in Japan. A New Drug Application for tenapanor for hyperphosphatemia has been approved in China with Fosun Pharma. Knight Therapeutics commercializes IBSRELA in Canada. For more information, please visit <https://ardelyx.com/> and connect with us on [X \(formerly known as Twitter\)](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

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