



## LINKED BY LOVE - MNITF FACT SHEET

### Linked by Love

- *Linked by Love* is a 6-episode “edutainment” series created by MNITF to provide vital information about kidney disease, prevention of kidney disease, kidney failure, transplantation and living donation.
- *Linked by Love* was created with the African-American/Black community as its primary target audience with a culturally relevant plot to help seamlessly communicate the key educational points.
- Similar to the *Fixing Paco* series targeting the Hispanic community, prior to *Linked by Love*, nothing existed to meet the educational needs of the Black community regarding kidney disease and transplantation in such an engaging and entertaining format.
- *Linked by Love* is intended to help decrease the disparities of kidney disease among African Americans and help to increase kidney transplantation and living donation.
- *Linked by Love* is available on the internet to provide worldwide access to vital health information. [www.LinkedybyLovetv.org](http://www.LinkedybyLovetv.org)
- There are six supplemental *Linked by Love: All Kidneys are Pink* videos consisting of interviews with medical professionals, transplant candidates and recipients, and living donors providing additional health information for each episode.
- Supplemental videos include interviews with cast and crew members sharing their experiences and the importance of being proactive in healthcare.
- MNITF was the primary funding source of the series and project. In addition, MNITF received a grant by the UniHealth Foundation, along with individual contributions from MNITF supporters, to help fund this project.

### Linked by Love Storyline and Cast

- *Linked by Love* follows the Morris family’s triumph in battling kidney failure.
- It is a fictional story intended to educate those at-risk for kidney disease, with CKD or in kidney failure about prevention of kidney disease and failure; and kidney transplantation as a treatment option for kidney failure.
- It provides end-stage kidney disease patients and their families with information about living donation, including paired and chain donation.
- Scientific research helped to create the storyline and character development by identifying the barriers causing the disparities of kidney disease among African Americans; and identifying the facilitators in helping to decrease the disparities and increase access to transplantation. MNITF provided a grant to the Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science to conduct this research.
- Houston Methodist Research Institute conducted a focus group study of the script and revisions were made based on the feedback of the focus group prior to finalizing the script.
- *Linked by Love* delivers some heart-warming and powerful performances by Michelle N. Carter, Byron Marc Newsome, Shirley Jordan, Gordon James, Jr., and Kiana Nicole Washington. The series also features Gloria Garayua, Kimleigh Smith and Brooklyn McLinn.
- Joe Camareno and Regina Ainsworth directed the *Linked by Love* series.

- The series was created by Nicole Mendez; written by Nicole J. Butler; and produced by Celtino Entertainment Group.

## **Kidney Disease**

- It is estimated that 37 million Americans have chronic kidney disease (CKD) and approximately 850 million people are affected by CKD worldwide
- Diabetes and high blood pressure are the two leading causes of CKD.
  - Nearly 1 in 3 people with diabetes have CKD
  - 1 in 5 with high blood pressure have CKD
- Kidney disease is the fastest-growing noncommunicable disease in the U.S.
- Kidney disease is one of the top 10 causes of death in the U.S. It kills more people each year than breast or prostate cancer.
- Kidney disease is known as a silent killer as symptoms often appear in the late stages and often overlooked.
  - As many as 9 in 10 people are unaware they have CKD
  - About 2 in 5 adults with severe CKD are unaware they have it
- African Americans experience kidney disease at a rate that is 25% higher than White Americans.
- African Americans are almost 4 times more likely to develop kidney failure.
- Kidney disease and progression to kidney failure can be prevented.
- Education regarding the risks and tips for prevention are both a major facilitator to prevention of kidney disease.

## **About the Mendez National Institute of Transplantation Foundation (MNITF):**

- MNITF is a public non-profit organization that adheres to its mission of advancing the science and practice of organ transplantation and end-stage organ disease therapies through research, education, and innovation.
- MNITF's commitment to education and outreach has resulted in successful, community patient education programs that target underserved populations to increase awareness and access to transplantation.
- The award-winning web series, *Fixing Paco*, which was shot in both English and Spanish, is a groundbreaking 10-episode telenovela-style series created to provide vital information about kidney transplantation and maintenance to Latinos and those with end-stage renal disease (ESRD).
- Similar to the award-winning *Fixing Paco* series, *Linked by Love* will present transplant and living donation information by combining education and entertainment (edutainment) to create a fictional story that incorporates drama and comedy. The project is unique because scientific research is being used to help create the main characters and storyline by addressing the common barriers that prevent Black or African Americans from accessing and utilizing transplantation as a treatment option.