

Here is an example of an individual who has placed his trust in this institution to make intelligent decisions on how best to use the money he's providing.

DR. FRANK CALIA

# The Independent Dialysis Foundation

## Dedicated to Improving Lives

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

The gift appears regularly once a month at the University's Office of Development and has since 1997. Designated for the Department of Medicine, the gift of unrestricted dollars supports faculty, research and educational needs. The man behind this long standing magnanimity is Dr. John Sadler, President of the Independent Dialysis Foundation.

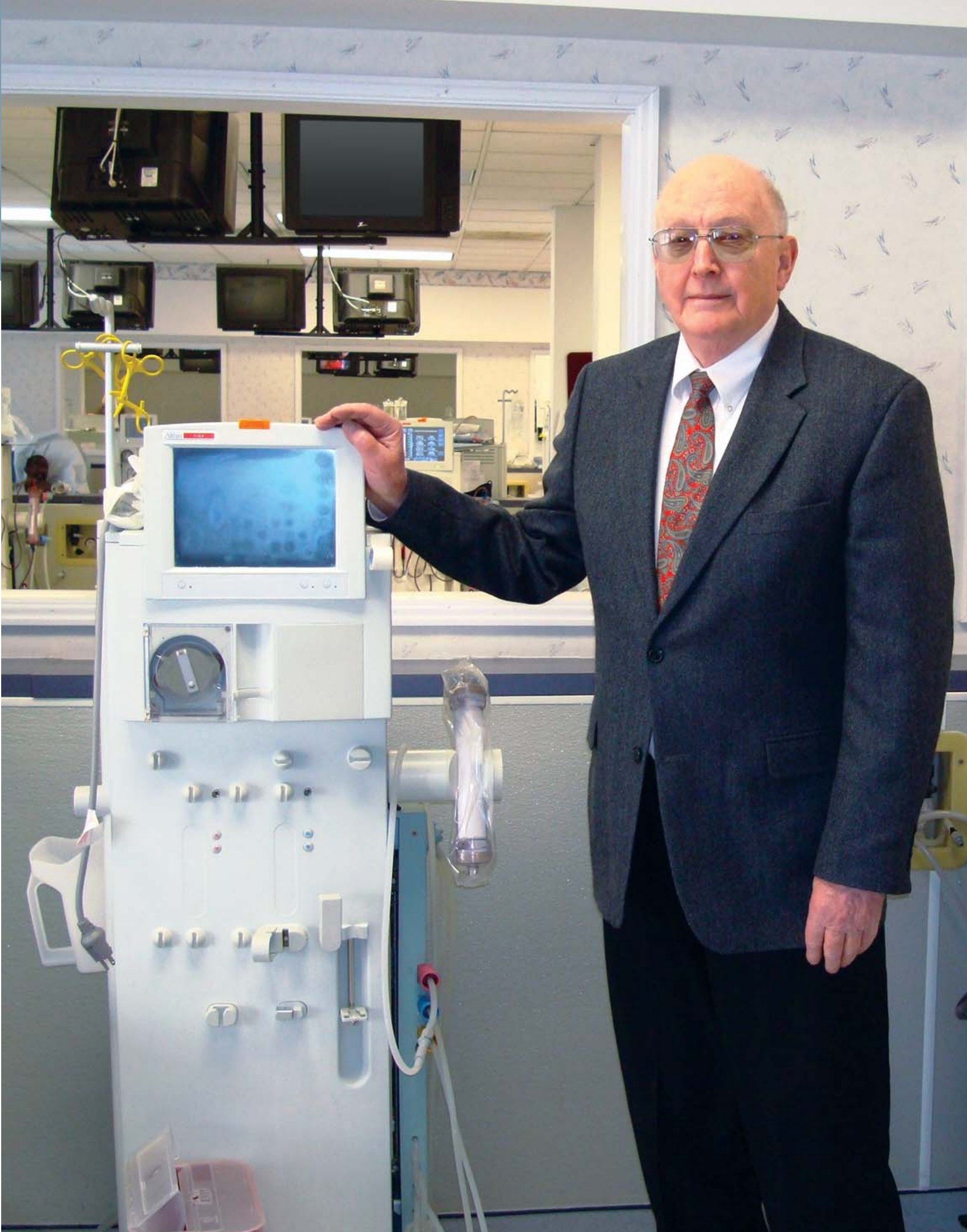
"Here is an example of an individual who has placed his trust in this institution to make intelligent decisions on how best to use the money he's providing," says Dr. Calia, Woodward Chair, Department of Medicine. "Occasionally departments' struggle and this type of gift enables us to focus on areas of excellence, and to maintain some of the programs that, otherwise, we wouldn't be able to continue without the generosity of people like John Sadler."???

### EARLY WORK IN DIALYSIS

Early in his career Dr. Sadler became curious about how the body manages water and its content and began investigating the kidney. When Dr. Sadler attended medical school at Duke University there were no nephrologists. "No one was studying kidney functions," says Dr. Sadler, "and of course there was no treatment for kidney failure." He served his residency at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta and there began to discover the medical and financial challenges of treating patients with renal failure. He directed one of the early dialysis centers. Later he was offered a position at the medical college in Richmond and a few months after his arrival there he received a call from Dr. Woodward, the chair of the Department of Medicine at the University of Maryland.

"He had heard about my work and wanted to know if I'd like to head up the new Division of Nephrology at the School of Medicine," recalls Dr. Sadler. "I told him I just got to Richmond and didn't think I was ready to leave yet." Dr. Woodward persuaded Dr. Sadler to come and at least have a look. "It didn't take me long to realize the potential of this new position. Then, that first night they took my wife and me to the Engineer's Club, fed us crab cakes and the deal was done."

After Dr. Sadler arrived at the School, the division was asked to manage a collaborative dialysis center located in a Nursing Home-Chronic Hospital.



Within a few years, it was overburdened, and the hospital could not operate it efficiently. Dr. Sadler requested funding to build a new freestanding center but was denied. Undeterred, he tapped into his own funding network and even took out an equity loan on his home. Through his efforts the Independent Dialysis Foundation (IDF) was founded in 1979. "I wasn't really interested in making a profit on patient care, so we made it a non-profit."

### AN EXPANDING NETWORK

The new facility advocated a self-dialysis treatment strategy. "Patients were responsible for their own treatment," says Dr. Sadler. "I believe that the advantage of being involved in your care is that your care is better. Nobody is more motivated to do it right than the patient." The center operated that way for 14 years, but then had to change to add staff assisted care.

Dr. Sadler went on to head the Division of Nephrology at the School for 22 years. He retired in 1994 to devote himself to the IDF. In 1997, the IDF moved headquarters to its current location in West Baltimore. Dr. Sadler was instrumental in the design of the new facility, and it has served as a model for others. Patients relax in recliners with magazines, individual TV monitors, and headphones while they undergo the three to four hour process. "If you ask them what's the worst part of it," says Dr. Sadler, "they'll tell you it's the boredom. We try to make them as comfortable as possible." In the open suite, the patients at their state-of-the-art dialysis stations are in full view of the two centrally located nursing stations. The facility handles about 120 patients each week.

Today the Foundation operates seven freestanding facilities, two Medicare certified hospital facilities, and service in three other hospitals across Maryland. The newest facility is located in Garrett County. "It is still operating at a loss," says Dr. Sadler, "but the patients out there were experiencing great hardships, because the closest center was in the next county, over an hour away. I felt we had to do something for them."

### UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Even with the ongoing success of the IDF, Dr. Sadler voices concerns about its future. "We have Medicare benefits for our patients, but the rates are not adequate to cover costs," says Dr. Sadler. "I don't know what will happen to us ultimately, but we are going to do the best we can for as long as we can. What I hope is that there will be a change in Medicare payment, so we won't have to struggle so hard to survive. What I fear is that there won't be any adjustment, and we will not be able to remain an independent, local operation."

But this uncertainty does not dampen Dr. Sadler's enthusiasm. On his desk is a small Lucite cube in which is embedded a tiny cylindrical microchip — one possible future advance for dialysis. "Dialysis patients, because of their chronic diseases, end up in the hospital more often. Many go to the ER and cannot tell the doctors what their medicines or conditions are. The chip is designed for subcutaneous implant and when scanned will transmit a code which gives physicians access to the patient's medical records. This will benefit the ER staff, the patient, even insurers, because unnecessary treatment will be avoided," says Dr. Sadler. He has set out to test this hypothesis in his dialysis centers.

Wherever the future of dialysis may lead, it is certain that this dedicated, compassionate man will remain a vital part of it. ★