Understanding APOL1 Kidney Disease Among Black Americans

The rates of severe kidney disease are high in individuals of African and Caribbean descent. This could be attributed to genetic variants in the APOL1 gene found only in individuals with recent African or Caribbean ancestry. These variants greatly increase rates of hypertension-associated ESKD, FSGS, HIV-associated nephropathy, and other forms of non-diabetic kidney disease.

What is APOL1 FSGS?
Every human being inherits 2 copies of the APOL1 gene, one from each parent. Those that inherit two variations in the APOL1 gene have 10x the risk for developing kidney disease, specifically FSGS. These variants of the APOL1 gene are only found in people of African or Caribbean ancestry.

Many people with the high-risk APOL1 genotype do not show any signs or symptoms of FSGS until kidney failure is approaching.

Knowing if you have the APOL1 gene variants is the key to unlocking the mystery of kidney disease in people with African and Caribbean ancestry.

References:
NephCure Kidney International website (5 May 2019). The Genetic FSGS Discovery Trailblazing Possible Kidney Disease Treatment.