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World Kidney Day reaches beyond Nephrology!

The idea of World Kidney Day is to shed light on kidney disease in order to raise awareness of this health issue and to provide education regarding prevention strategies. A few simple rules (see below) can keep the kidneys healthy – and that pays off, because kidney diseases affect many other organ systems. “This is why interdisciplinary collaboration is important”, explains ERA-EDTA President Professor Carmine Zoccali. On the occasion of World Kidney Day 2018, the ERA-EDTA published interviews with experts from neighbouring disciplines highlighting the intersection of nephrology and other specialties. Zoccali draws the conclusion: “We have to act together!”

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is not only a very risky condition, but is also one of the diseases whose prevalence increased in the period from 1990 to 2013. Still, one cannot be sure whether this is just the tip of the iceberg – a further rise in CKD patients is feared because the prevalence of diabetes and hypertension, two conditions that often lead to kidney failure, has risen dramatically worldwide in recent decades. Even now, the average age standardised mortality rate due to low kidney function (GFR) is 21 deaths per 100,000 [1]. In particular, the cardiovascular death toll from CKD is huge: In 2013, there have been 1.2 million cardiovascular deaths attributed to CKD [2]. The death rate in CKD is incredibly high! AIDS, for example, accounts for “only” 1.9 deaths per 100,000 [3] – but think about all the campaigning with celebrities and the resulting recognition of HIV as a priority health issue. Every child has heard of these three letters, but only very few have ever heard of the three letters CKD, even though the number of people who die from kidney deterioration is eleven times higher.

“We have to improve our prevention strategies and should think of effective kidney health prevention programmes”, explains Professor Carmine Zoccali, president of the ERA-EDTA. “This is especially important, because kidney health reaches far beyond nephrology. There is a bidirectional crosstalk between the kidneys and the heart as well as between the kidneys and our blood pressure. Furthermore, an impairment of kidney health brings about a poorer prognosis with regard to quality of life as well as survival in patients with autoimmune diseases as well as in patients with diabetes. This illustrates that the kidneys are

really at the “heart of health”. As Zoccali points out, protecting the kidneys has many beneficial effects and pays off: Limited kidney filtration function (under 60 ml/min/1.73 m²), for example, constitutes an independent risk factor for total and cardiovascular mortality. So does proteinuria: with an albumin-creatinine ratio ≥ 30 mg/g, the threshold value for the presence of CKD, mortality risk increases by 50% [4].

“By improving CKD prevention we can kill far more than one bird with one stone. Kidney diseases affect many other organ systems and have to be regarded as systemic diseases. This is why interdisciplinary collaboration is important”, says Zoccali. Therefore, ERA-EDTA is eager to strengthen its relationship with other internal medical disciplines, to initiate new collaborations and to intensify existing fruitful ones. On the occasion of World Kidney Day 2018, the ERA-EDTA published interviews with experts from neighbouring disciplines highlighting the intersection of nephrology and other specialties. (read here: <http://web.era-edta.org/world-kidney-day-reaches-beyond-nephrology>). The conclusion drawn by Zoccali is: “We have to act together to raise awareness of kidney diseases and to provide education regarding prevention strategies. Because kidney diseases affect much more than `just` the kidneys.”

7 simple rules to keep your kidneys healthy

1. Control your blood pressure regularly. If you need blood pressure lowering drugs, take them as prescribed!
2. Start losing weight, if you are overweight! Too many kilos can put stress on the kidneys.
3. Control your blood sugar levels regularly. If diabetes is diagnosed, follow dietary advice, eat right and do sport. It is vital for your kidneys that your blood sugar level is in the normal range.
4. Be physically active every day. Sport has protective effects, also on the kidneys!
5. Stop smoking! Nicotine harms the blood vessels. The kidneys consist of many thousands of tiny blood vessels. If they are damaged, kidney function decreases.
6. Avoid drugs that can harm kidney function like the so-called non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS), which include many over-the-counter painkillers.
7. Have your kidney function checked once every two years (if you are a diabetes patient or suffer from high blood pressure or if you are obese, make sure to get a kidney check every year!). The GP carries out the kidney check. If kidney function is low, a nephrologist has to be involved.

References

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About ERA-EDTA

With more than 7,500 members, the ERA-EDTA ("European Renal Association – European Dialysis and Transplant Association") is one of the biggest nephrology associations worldwide and one of the most important and prestigious European Medical Associations. It supports basic and clinical research in the fields of clinical nephrology, dialysis, renal transplantation and related subjects. It also supports a number of studies as well as research groups and has founded a special "Fellowship Programme" for young investigators as well as grant programmes. In order to involve young nephrologists in all its activities ERA-EDTA has created the "Young Nephrologists' Platform" (YNP), a very active committee whose board includes members who are 40 years old or younger. In addition, it has established various working groups to promote the collaboration of nephrologists with other medical disciplines (e.g. cardiology, immunology). Furthermore, a "European Renal Best Practice" (ERBP) advisory board was established by the ERA-EDTA to draw up and publish guidelines and position statements. Another important goal of the ERA-EDTA is education: The series of CME-courses combined with the annual congress offer an attractive scientific programme to cover the need for continuous medical education for doctors working in the fields of nephrology, dialysis and transplantation. The association's journals, *NDT* (Nephrology, Dialysis, Transplantation) and *CKJ* (Clinical Kidney Journal), are currently the leading nephrology journals in Europe; furthermore, *NDT-Educational* is the online educational journal of the society, with free access for all users, as well as being a very important and useful feature of *NDT-Educational* "Literature Review". The ERA-EDTA Registry is a large epidemiologic database comparing countries by assessing nephrology practices throughout Europe. ENP, the European Nephrology Portal, is the latest new initiative of ERA-EDTA: here all those interested in the activities of the Society can find everything that is happening, all in one place! Finally, ERA-EDTA is a member of the European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA), a consortium of patients, nurses and foundations all related to renal issues that actively interacts with the European Parliament. For more information, please visit www.era-edta.org