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Contact: Shari Leventhal: 202-416-0658, sleventhal@asn-online.org (before Oct. 27)
October 27–28: ASN Management Office, America’s Center, Room 130, (314) 342-5511
Friday, Oct. 29 – Monday, Nov. 1: ASN Media Room, America’s Center, Room 250,
(314) 342-5508 (media room), 202-236-8142 (after hours)

VERY LOW PROTEIN DIET MAY WORSEN HEALTH OF KIDNEY DISEASE PATIENTS

St. Louis, MO (Oct. 30, 2004)— Although popular, high protein diets like Atkins[®], can be harmful to patients with kidney disease, new research suggests that very low protein diets may not be a healthier alternative. These findings will be presented during the American Society of Nephrology’s 37th Annual Meeting and Scientific Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri.

This research was obtained through follow-up of a long-term randomized, controlled trial, entitled the Modification of Diet in Renal Disease (MDRD) Study. The trial, conducted from 1988-1993, evaluated 255 patients with predominantly non-diabetic kidney disease and severe reduction in kidney function, as defined by a glomerular filtration rate (GFR) of less than 25 ml/min/1.73 m², compared to the normal value of 125 ml/min/1.73 m². By limiting protein intake to very low levels, patients can reduce the build-up of waste in their blood and delay the onset of symptoms from kidney failure.

Trial results of this study indicate that the mortality of patients consuming a very low protein diet (0.28 g/kg/d with supplements) did not slow the progression of kidney disease and appeared to increase mortality compared to patients consuming a low protein diet (0.58 g/kg/d) over the 10-year period after the trial was completed. A companion study, also reported by Dr. Levey at this meeting, shows a possible beneficial effect on progression of kidney disease with no detrimental effect on mortality of the low protein diet compared to a usual protein intake (1.2 g/kg/d). “Although the results remain inconclusive, the studies echo concerns of investigators that very low protein diets may be detrimental to the health of patients with kidney disease. Further research is warranted, but in the meantime, patients are best advised to work with their nephrologists and dietitians to create the best diet for their condition,” said Dr. Andrew S. Levey, Chief, Division of Nephrology at Tufts-New England Medical Center.

The findings of these studies will be revealed by Dr. Levey during an invited lecture, entitled “Revisiting the MDRD Study: Effect of Low Protein Diet in Progression of Chronic, Kidney Disease” will be discussed by Dr. Levey on Saturday, October 30 at 5:30 p.m.–6:00 p.m. in Room 240 of the America’s Center.

MORE

The ASN is a not-for-profit organization of 9,000 physicians and scientists dedicated to the study of nephrology and committed to providing a forum for the promulgation of information regarding the latest research and clinical findings on kidney diseases. ASN's Renal Week 2004, the largest nephrology meeting of its kind, will provide a forum for more than 12,000 nephrologists to discuss the latest findings in renal research and engage in educational sessions relating advances in the care of patients with kidney and related disorders from October 27- November 1, 2004 at the America's Center in St. Louis, Missouri.

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