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HOW CAN THE NEPHROLOGY COMMUNITY MEET THE NEEDS OF THE GROWING POPULATION OF ELDERLY PATIENTS?

Experts Discuss Needs of Geriatric Population on ASN Podcast

Washington, DC (August 14, 2009)—Individuals 100 years or older are currently the fastest growing age group in the United States and estimates indicate that there may be as many as one million centenarians (100 years or older) in the United States by 2050.

Many individuals within this growing community suffer from Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD). In fact, the fastest-growing group of patients initiating dialysis is 75 years old and older and providing the best care for this group of patients presents significant challenges.

Recently, ASN Executive Director Tod Ibrahim spoke with nephrologist Dimitrios G. Oreopoulos, MD, PhD, (Toronto Western Hospital) and geriatrician Rosanne Leipzig, MD (Mt. Sinai Medical Center) about the “demographic imperative,” in which “unprecedented numbers of older adults living well past 65 and even over 100 in the world and particularly within our nation.”

Sixty percent of physicians across all medical disciplines of medicine care for older patients with kidney disease and “changes in kidney function significantly impact the rest of the body and the whole patient, including psychosocial conditions and cognitive-functional abilities,” explains Dr. Leipzig. Physicians need training to understand how disease presents in elderly patients and how patients’ age may require modification to treatment regimens.

During the conversation, Dr. Oreopoulos explains that there are a number of conditions that present frequently and sometimes uniquely within the elderly population, including depression, changes in nutritional needs, functioning capacity, decision making ability, delirium, and medication management. Education about the specific challenges of caring for aging patients will help physicians modify treatment as necessary to meet the unique needs of this growing patient population.

The above mentioned podcast can be accessed through this link <http://asn-online.org/publications/kidneynews/podcast.aspx> and is available on iTunes.

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ASN also offers an annual In-Depth Nephrology Course entitled, “Geriatric Nephrology: An Epidemiologic and Clinical Challenge,” which will be held during Renal Week 2009 on October 27 and 28 at the San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, CA.

ASN recently led efforts to improve training for nephrologists on the topic of geriatrics by producing and distributing the Online Geriatric Nephrology Curriculum. The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) has mandated that fellows receive formal training in geriatric nephrology, but twenty-five percent of institutions with accredited US nephrology training programs do not have accredited geriatric training programs. The ASN online curriculum will serve as a primary source of educational material for geriatric nephrology training nationwide.

Dr. Oreopoulos worked with Jocelyn Wiggins, BM, BCh (University of Michigan) to oversee development of the curriculum. “Caring for elderly patients with end-stage renal disease (ESRD) is an issue of growing importance. There remain many unanswered questions about the management of elderly patients with ESRD. This text will help nephrologists in training and those in practice improve and refine their approaches to the care of elderly kidney patients,” said Dr. Oreopoulos.

The Society continues to lead the fight against kidney disease by attempting to address complex areas of interest, including how to improve the care of geriatric kidney patients through education and communication.

Founded in 1966, the American Society of Nephrology (ASN) is the world’s largest professional society devoted to the study of kidney disease. Comprised of 11,000 physicians and scientists, ASN continues to promote expert patient care, advance medical research, and educate the renal community. ASN also informs policymakers about issues of importance to kidney doctors and their patients. ASN funds research, and through its world-renowned meetings and first-class publications, disseminates information and educational tools that empower physicians.

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