



**PRESS RELEASE**

## **A Plea for Prevention**

**“Improvement in Primary Prevention of CKD would lead to a massive reduction of healthcare cost”**

*August 22, 2017*

A review by Professor Raymond Vanholder (Chairman of the European Kidney Health Alliance/EKHA) and colleagues has been published in the renowned scientific journal “Nature Reviews” [1]. According to the article, renal replacement therapy (RRT) imposes a substantial financial strain on health systems. As long as expenditure for dialysis personnel and especially for medication keep rising, no easing of the burden can be expected.

According to the authors, measures of favoring and promoting more cost-efficient RRT, such as home-based dialysis and transplantation, have so far not been sufficiently implemented in European health systems. Regardless, these measures alone would be insufficient. “It is time to increase investment in prevention instead of the current focus on investing in curative approaches”, explains Professor Vanholder, which would lead to a more consistent and sustainable approach. The authors explain, the cost to benefit ratio of each prevention strategy should be evaluated before it is implemented, especially in case of secondary prevention with costly medications. Vanholder et al. argue that primary prevention is more cost-effective than secondary prevention in CKD, because many primary prevention measures would simultaneously reduce the burden of other chronic diseases such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and cancer. “Therefore, primary prevention measures most certainly pay off. But, surely, a successful implementation of these measures is difficult and will mainly depend on politicians and stakeholders”, comments Vanholder.

Clearly, society should be guided towards a healthier lifestyle – but how can this be done? Three measures are discussed in the paper: (1) Improvement of health literacy amongst people, particularly the youth, (2) implementation of labelling on food products which help the consumer understand easily the nutritional value of the product, and (3) public policy geared towards improving the health of the population. The latter is highly controversial, because, for instance, one cannot force people to increase their physical activity. But as discussed in the paper, governments could establish a public policy aimed at encouraging exercise and facilitating people’s access to places for and means to

exercise, and they might make healthier foods more accessible to consumers, and unhealthy foods, less desirable to purchase because of fat tax or sugar tax, etc..

“Politicians keep complaining about rising healthcare expenditures, which are driven a lot by RRT. We nephrologists can only suggest efficient measures, but we cannot implement them. Societal challenges for a healthier society have to be tackled by governments and stakeholders. They should invest in primary prevention strategies in order to save cost in the long-run. In our view, improvements in the primary prevention of CKD would lead to a massive reduction of healthcare costs”, concludes Professor Vanholder.

[1] <http://www.nature.com/nrneph/journal/v13/n7/abs/nrneph.2017.63.html>

### **About EKHA**

European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA) is an alliance of non-profit organisations representing all key stakeholders in kidney health issues, including patients, nephrologists, researchers and healthcare workers. EKHA's mission is to work together to reduce the incidence and impact of kidney disease in Europe by influencing policies that improve awareness, prevention, treatment, education/training and research. The founding members of EKHA are:

- European Renal Association - European Dialysis and Transplant Association (ERA-EDTA)
- European Dialysis and Transplant Nurses Association/European Renal Care Association (EDTNA/ERCA)
- European Kidney Patients Federation (EKPF)
- International Federation of Kidney Foundations (IFKF)

In addition, EKHA has the support of 14 national Associate Member organisations, including national renal and patient associations from the European region. [www.ekha.eu](http://www.ekha.eu)

### **About ERA-EDTA**

With almost 7,000 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 activities ERA-EDTA has the Young Nephrologists' Platform (YNP), a very active committee whose board includes members who are 40 years old or younger. Besides, 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: several series of CME-courses as well as the annual congress offer an attractive scientific programme to cover the need of 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, open for free to all uses, of the Society as well as the very important and useful feature of NDT-Educational "Literature Review". The ERA-EDTA Registry is a large epidemiologic database comparing countries by assessing nephrology practice 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 done, all in one place! Finally, ERA-EDTA is member of the European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA), a consortium of patients, nurses, foundations all related to renal issues that actively interacts with the European Parliament. For more information please visit [www.era-edta.org](http://www.era-edta.org)