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European Kidney Forum 2022 : Urgent need for innovative and green kidney care!

Enhancing patient's survival, quality of life and greener nephrology practices

Brussels, 15 June 2022

Organised in the context of the Decade of the Kidney™, the European Kidney Forum 2022 focused on identifying current challenges in kidney disease therapies from the patient, society, and environmental perspectives. Speakers shared insights on ways to ramp up innovation in kidney therapies, but also looked at inspiring successes from US kidney health advocates, and how to replicate these achievements at the EU level.

"I continue to be shocked to see that kidney replacement therapies have barely evolved since their development, more than 50 years ago. It is an issue we have been addressing for many years, together with EKHA and the MEP Group for Kidney Health. Covid-19 further demonstrated the need to find alternatives to current kidney therapies. Those treatments are extremely burdensome for patients and very polluting for the environment".
– MEP Hilde Vautmans, Chair of the MEP Group for Kidney Health.

Indeed, the most commonly used kidney replacement therapy, dialysis, is not only burdensome for patients but also consumes massive amounts of water, creates lots of plastic and electronic waste, and leaves a considerable carbon footprint. This is due to the need of electricity to pump blood and dialysis water through the machine, heating of dialysis water to body temperature, climatization of dialysis units, the production process of the dialyzers themselves, and transport of material and patients, next to the usual environmental burden of any disease. Kidney transplantation is a better therapeutic option but comes with its own challenges (shortages of organs, increased risk of cancer and infections, proportion of the patient population that is not eligible).

It is time for alternative kidney replacement therapies that offer better options to patients in terms of survival and quality of life and take into account the environmental threats. The EU recently launched a series of initiatives, with the aim of becoming an ecologic forerunner. The European Green Deal sets the goal to reduce the EU's greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030, and make the EU climate neutral by 2050. The LIFE Program 2021–2027 is the new EU's funding instrument for environment and climate action. The Horizon Europe programme supports ecology-oriented research and innovation.

"Building on these opportunities will prove essential in fostering green innovation in nephrology, and ultimately tackling existing challenges and improving the life of kidney patients. To achieve this, kidney disease must be considered as a public health emergency and no longer as a comorbidity of other Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). If nothing is done soon, projections show that it will become the 5th cause of death globally by 2040."
says Prof. Raymond Vanholder, President of the European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA)



The European Kidney Forum 2022 called on EU policy makers to facilitate green innovation for kidney disease treatments and to learn from the US initiative to put kidney health high on the policy agenda.

The Forum was supported by Hansa Biopharma, AstraZaneca, Baxter, Fresenius KABI, B. Braun, CSL Behring, Vifor Pharma, Medtronic, and Fresenius Medical Care.

Note to editors

Why are these issues important?

- Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) is a serious condition where the kidneys are damaged and cannot purify the blood properly.
- More than 50 million people suffer from CKD in the EU (100 million in Europe), and projections estimate that CKD will be the 5th leading cause of death worldwide by 2040.
- The way we deliver care for end-stage renal disease has not substantially changed since the discovery of dialysis in the 1940's.
- Kidney disease treatments remain highly burdensome for patients, costly for healthcare systems and very polluting for the environment.
- In the aftermath of COVID19 and in the context of the green transition, it is essential to find innovative and green treatments for kidney patients.
- Many EU initiatives, for example as part of the European Green Deal or the Horizon Europe programme, could support the much-needed progress in kidney disease therapies.
- Kidney health is high on the US policy agenda, and successful initiatives such as the 'Kidney Health Initiative' and the 'Kidney X Innovation Accelerator' have been implemented. The EU could draw inspiration from the US example and understand whether this success could be replicated at a European level, to become one of the leaders in medical innovation.

About EKHA

EKHA is a common effort by stakeholders to propose solutions for the challenges of Kidney Disease in Europe through efficient screening and prevention and a more adequate care pathway intended to facilitate the provision of appropriate and affordable treatment to all Europeans equally, while promoting the highest quality of care. EKHA works on the principle that the issue of kidney health and disease must be considered at European level and that both the European Commission and European Parliament have vital roles to play in assisting national governments with these challenges.

About the Decade of the Kidney™

The Decade of the Kidney™ campaign is a pan-European campaign which aims to put the spotlight on kidney disease at EU level during the current decade (2020-2030). The campaign was first initiated in the United-States by the [American Association of Kidney Patients \(AAKP\)](#) in 2019 and launched in Europe as part of World Kidney Day 2021 by the European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA).



EKHA Media Queries

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