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Chronic kidney disease and hypertension: Twin challenges for 21st century Europe

Meeting at European Parliament relays stark message and calls for action to support early identification and treatment of CKD, especially among patients at greatest risk

Strasbourg, France, 10th March 2009 --- The European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA) and World Kidney Day (WKD) organisations today call for action at EU level to support early awareness, identification and treatment of CKD and its associated diseases such as cardiovascular disease (CVD), hypertension (high blood pressure) and diabetes. The MEP Group for Kidney Health, launched on WKD last year, met at the European Parliament in Strasbourg today with an eminent panel of renal experts, politicians, and patient and kidney organisations. The meeting relayed the stark message that unchecked high blood pressure may severely damage the kidneys and is a major cause of CKD.

Speaking at the event, Professor Andrew Rees, Chairman of EKHA commented, “Although, chronic kidney disease affects at least 10% of the European population, there is very little awareness of the problems it causes. EKHA was formed to increase understanding of the challenges posed by CKD and to promote effective public health strategies to fight what has been called Europe’s silent epidemic”.

Greater efforts to prevent CKD and to detect its earliest stages are needed to slow the progression of kidney disease to kidney failure and to prevent the complications it causes, including hypertension and other cardiovascular diseases such as heart attacks and strokes.¹ Conversely hypertension is an important cause of CKD. To support this event and the WKD 2009 ‘Keep the pressure down’ campaign, a pan-European survey, sponsored by an educational grant from Amgen, was conducted among 486 people treated for cardiovascular disease. Worryingly, the survey showed that three quarters of patients (73%) with CVD — most of whom have high blood pressure — were unaware of their increased risk of CKD. Only half (47%) of those surveyed had had their kidney function checked by their physician and, most worrying of all, over 80% of those surveyed had had no discussion with their physician about the steps they could take to look after their kidneys.

Commenting on the results Professor Carmine Zoccali from the Institute of Biomedicine, Clinical Epidemiology and Physiopathology of Renal Diseases and Hypertension, Hospital Riuniti, Italy, added, “These results are alarming, we need to act now to educate people with cardiovascular diseases such as high blood pressure to help minimise their risk of developing CKD. Simple measures and screening can help reduce the number of people

needlessly suffering from CKD and its consequences which can severely impact on patients' health and quality of life.”

In its most advanced stage CKD requires renal replacement therapy (RRT) with dialysis or transplantation. The current EU debate on organ donation and transplantation underlines the need to address the shortage of organs for transplantation. The European Parliament's official resolution on organ donation and transplantation recognises the importance not only of cooperation between Member States on addressing this shortage, but of the necessity for public health measures to facilitate the early detection and management of the chronic diseases such as CKD, and so prevent those affected from ever developing kidney failure. Preventative strategies are the only way to minimise the number of people needing organ transplants in the future.

Mrs. Frieda Brepoels MEP commented, “I strongly believe the European Union can play a significant role in encouraging Member States to take urgent action to acknowledge the size of the problem of chronic kidney disease and high blood pressure and the other diseases linked to them, and to develop effective strategies to prevent the death and suffering they cause. Progress can be made by exchanging best practices between Member States and by improving existing technologies to detect kidney disease so as to assure that every European citizen has equal access to high-quality health care.”

The link between CKD and CVD works both ways: hypertension and other cardiovascular diseases cause CKD and CKD causes hypertension and greatly increases the risk of developing other types of cardiovascular disease. Indeed, people with CKD are more likely to die of CVD than to develop kidney failure.² Increasing awareness of kidney disease is the first and perhaps most important step towards preventing kidney failure. The EKHA calls on the EU to use its authoritative voice to support National Governments in developing public health programs that acknowledge the importance of preventing CKD.

The EKHA event at the European Parliament, Strasbourg is supported by Amgen and HemoCue.



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Notes to editors:

About the EKHA

The European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA) is an alliance of not-for-profit organisations that represent the key stakeholders in kidney health issues in Europe. EKHA member organisations are CEAPIR (European Kidney Patients' Federation), EDTNA/ERCA (European Dialysis and Transplant Nurses Association/European Renal Care Association), ERA-EDTA (European Renal Association - European Dialysis and Transplant Association), IFKF (International Federation of Kidney Foundations). More information at www.ekha.eu

About World Kidney Day

World Kidney Day (WKD) is a global health awareness campaign focusing on the importance of our kidneys and reducing the frequency and impact of kidney disease and its associated health problems worldwide. The campaign is celebrated every year on the second Thursday of March in more than 100 countries on six continents.

About Amgen

Amgen discovers, develops, manufactures and delivers innovative human therapeutics. A biotechnology pioneer since 1980, Amgen was one of the first companies to realize the new science's promise by bringing safe and effective medicines from lab, to manufacturing plant, to patient. Amgen therapeutics have changed the practice of medicine, helping millions of people around the world in the fight against cancer, kidney disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and other serious illnesses. With a deep and broad pipeline of potential new medicines, Amgen remains committed to advancing science to dramatically improve people's lives. To learn more about our pioneering science and our vital medicines, visit www.amgen.com.

About HemoCue

HemoCue, a Quest Diagnostics company, is a leading global company in a field of diagnostics known as near patient, or point of care, testing. In 1982, HemoCue introduced the first system making accurate haemoglobin testing possible in near patient settings. The company also manufactures point of care tests for glucose and urine albumin. Quest Diagnostics acquired HemoCue in 2007. More information at www.hemocue.com.

About CKD and its Symptoms

Chronic Kidney Disease is the general name for persistent irreversible damage to the kidney. In its earliest stages, the kidneys may only have minor structural damage. Often such damage tends to progress if undetected and untreated. One of the signs of early CKD is the presence of small amounts of protein in the urine. More advanced CKD is characterised by progressively greater abnormalities in the chemical composition of the blood, anaemia - a cause of tiredness and shortness of breath - and bone abnormalities. The most advanced form of CKD occurs when the kidney has been nearly completely destroyed and treatment with dialysis or kidney transplantation is required for survival. Many individuals

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with CKD do not progress to kidney failure and treatment has the twin objectives of correcting the abnormalities resulting from the kidney damage and of preventing progression to more advanced stages.

Many factors contribute to the progression of CKD. The most common causes are diabetes, hypertension, and generalised atherosclerosis. Especially when these factors are associated with the loss of albumin in the urine, renal function will rapidly decline with end stage renal disease being the outcome. An ageing population coupled with the growing prevalence of obesity-related type 2 diabetes has increased the number of people with or at risk of CKD.

About the Survey

The survey was conducted by research agency TNS, among 962 patients, across 5 European countries (France, Germany, UK, Italy and Spain). The sample comprised 227 patients with diabetes, 486 with CVD, and 233 with both conditions. 16 further patients had CKD in combination with diabetes and/or CVD. The survey was conducted to highlight the current gaps in knowledge among at-risk groups (CVD and diabetes patients) and the importance of public health strategies to address the urgent need for CKD recognition. The survey was conducted in February 2009.

EKHA Media Queries

Anna Rouillard

Tel: +32 2 639 6230

Email: anna.rouillard@ekha.eu

WKD Media Queries

Angela Guillemet

Mobile: +353 863 11 40 67

Email: info@worldkidneyday.org

¹ A. Levey, A. Schoolwerth, N. Burrows, D. Williams, K. Stith, W. McClellan, Comprehensive Public Health Strategies for Preventing the Development, Progression, and Complications of CKD: Report of an Expert Panel Convened by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Am J Kidney Diseases*, 2008 53: 3 522-535

² Shulman NB, Ford CE, Hall WD, et al. Prognostic value of serum creatinine and effect of treatment of hypertension on renal function: results from the hypertension detection and follow-up program. The Hypertension Detection and Follow-up Program Cooperative Group. *Hypertension*. 1989;13(5 suppl):180-193.