

# CJASN

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## Editorials

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**1 Is Fluid Overload as Measured by Bioimpedance Spectroscopy Harmful in CKD—If So, Why?**

*Lee A. Hebert and Samir Parikh*

*See related article on page 39.*

**4 ANCAs Are Also Antimonocyte Cytoplasmic Autoantibodies**

*J. Charles Jennette and Ronald J. Falk*

*See related article on page 54.*

**7 Staying on Target with Continuous Dialysis**

*Sevag Demirjian and William H. Fissell*

*See related article on page 74.*

**9  Dysphoria Induced in Dialysis Providers by Secondary Hyperparathyroidism**

*Irfana H. Soomro and David S. Goldfarb*

*See related articles on pages 90 and 98.*

## Original Articles

---

### Acute Kidney Injury

**12 Urinary Elafin and Kidney Injury in Hematopoietic Cell Transplant Recipients**

*Sangeeta Hingorani, Laura S. Finn, Emily Pao, Rick Lawler, Gary Schoch, George B. McDonald, Behzad Najafian, Brenda Sandmaier, and Ted Gooley*

**21 AKI Complications in Critically Ill Patients: Association with Mortality Rates and RRT**

*Alexandre Braga Libório, Tacyano Tavares Leite, Fernanda Macedo de Oliveira Neves, Flávio Teles, and Candice Torres de Melo Bezerra*

### Chronic Kidney Disease

**29 Fibroblast Growth Factor 23 and Incident CKD in Type 2 Diabetes**

*Tamara Isakova, Timothy E. Craven, Jungwha Lee, Julia J. Scialla, Huiliang Xie, Patricia Wahl, Santica M. Marcovina, Robert P. Byington, and Myles Wolf*

**39 Association of Fluid Overload with Cardiovascular Morbidity and All-Cause Mortality in Stages 4 and 5 CKD**

*Yi-Chun Tsai, Yi-Wen Chiu, Jer-Chia Tsai, Hung-Tien Kuo, Chi-Chih Hung, Shang-Jyh Hwang, Tzu-Hui Chen, Mei-Chuan Kuo, and Hung-Chun Chen*

*See related editorial on page 1.*

### Clinical Immunology and Pathology

**47 Interobserver Agreement on Histopathological Lesions in Class III or IV Lupus Nephritis**

*Suzanne Wilhelmus, H. Terence Cook, Laure-Hélène Noël, Franco Ferrario, Ron Wolterbeek, Jan A. Bruijn, and Ingeborg M. Bajema*

**54 M2 Macrophage Infiltrates in the Early Stages of ANCA-Associated Pauci-Immune Necrotizing GN**

*Lei Zhao, Michael Z. David, Elizabeth Hyjek, Anthony Chang, and Shane M. Meehan*

*See related editorial on page 4.*

Clinical Nephrology

- 63 Association of Urine  $\alpha$ 1-Microglobulin with Kidney Function Decline and Mortality in HIV-Infected Women**  
*Vasantha Jotwani, Rebecca Scherzer, Alison Abraham, Michelle M. Estrella, Michael Bennett, Mardge H. Cohen, Marek Nowicki, Anjali Sharma, Mary Young, Phyllis C. Tien, Joachim H. Ix, Mark J. Sarnak, Chirag R. Parikh, and Michael G. Shlipak*

Critical Care Nephrology


- 74 Reductions in Red Blood Cell 2,3-Diphosphoglycerate Concentration during Continuous Renal Replacement Therapy**  
*Shilpa Sharma, Carlo Brugnara, Rebecca A. Betensky, and Sushrut S. Waikar*  
*See related editorial on page 7.*

Epidemiology and Outcomes

- 80 Relationship between Stroke and Mortality in Dialysis Patients**  
*James B. Wetmore, Milind A. Phadnis, Edward F. Ellerbeck, Theresa I. Shireman, Sally K. Rigler, and Jonathan D. Mahnken*

ESRD and Chronic Dialysis

- 90 Clinical Outcomes after Parathyroidectomy in a Nationwide Cohort of Patients on Hemodialysis**  
*Areef Ishani, Jiannong Liu, James B. Wetmore, Kimberly A. Lowe, Thy Do, Brian D. Bradbury, Geoffrey A. Block, and Allan J. Collins*  
*See related editorial on page 9.*

- 98  Recent Changes in Therapeutic Approaches and Association with Outcomes among Patients with Secondary Hyperparathyroidism on Chronic Hemodialysis: The DOPPS Study**  
*Francesca Tentori, Mia Wang, Brian A. Bieber, Angelo Karaboyas, Yun Li, Stefan H. Jacobson, Vittorio E. Andreucci, Masafumi Fukagawa, Luc Frimat, David C. Mendelssohn, Friedrich K. Port, Ronald L. Pisoni, and Bruce M. Robinson*  
*See related editorial on page 9.*

- 111 Association of Indoxyl Sulfate with Heart Failure among Patients on Hemodialysis**  
*Xue-Sen Cao, Jun Chen, Jian-Zhou Zou, Yi-Hong Zhong, Jie Teng, Jun Ji, Zhang-Wei Chen, Zhong-Hua Liu, Bo Shen, Yu-Xin Nie, Wen-Lv Lv, Fang-Fang Xiang, Xiao Tan, and Xiao-Qiang Ding*

Health Services Research

- 120 Conservative Care for ESRD in the United Kingdom: A National Survey**  
*Ikumi Okamoto, Sarah Tonkin-Crine, Hugh Rayner, Fliss E.M. Murtagh, Ken Farrington, Fergus Caskey, Charles Tomson, Fiona Loud, Roger Greenwood, Donal J. O'Donoghue, and Paul Roderick*

Renal Transplantation

- 127 Patterns of Growth after Kidney Transplantation among Children with ESRD**  
*Doris Franke, Lena Thomas, Rena Steffens, Leo Pavičić, Jutta Gellermann, Kerstin Froede, Uwe Querfeld, Dieter Haffner, and Miroslav Živičnjak*

---

Renal Physiology

- 135 Collecting Duct Principal Cell Transport Processes and Their Regulation**  
*David Pearce, Rama Soundararajan, Christiane Trimpert, Ossama B. Kashlan, Peter M.T. Deen, and Donald E. Kohan*

---

In-Depth Review

- 147 Biomarkers of AKI: A Review of Mechanistic Relevance and Potential Therapeutic Implications**  
*Joseph L. Alge and John M. Arthur*

### 156 Performance Measures in Dialysis Facilities: What Is the Goal?


*Fredric O. Finkelstein*

## Special Feature

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### 159 Pharmacokinetic Assessment in Patients Receiving Continuous RRT: Perspectives from the Kidney Health Initiative

*Thomas D. Nolin, George R. Aronoff, William H. Fissell, Lokesh Jain, Rajnikanth Madabushi, Kellie Reynolds, Lei Zhang, Shiew Mei Huang, Rajnish Mehrotra, Michael F. Flessner, John K. Leypoldt, Jennifer W. Witcher, Issam Zineh, Patrick Archdeacon, Prabir Roy-Chaudhury, and Stuart L. Goldstein*

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### On the Cover

*What's the diagnosis?* A 46-year-old woman with history of deceased donor kidney transplant 4 years ago presented with headache and confusion. Workup revealed finding diagnostic of neurotoxoplasmosis. The patient's immunosuppressive regimen was modified she also received intravenous sulfadiazine, pyrimethamine, and folinic acid. Over the next 10 days, she deteriorated with worsening sensorium, mild hypotension, and serum creatinine concentration rising from 1.3 to 1.8 mg/dL. Intravenous fluids restored hemodynamic stability; however kidney function did not improve with serum creatinine rising further to 2.1 mg/dL. Physical examination noted a fluctuating mental status but no other significant abnormalities. Ultrasound of the renal allograft revealed increased echogenicity and high resistive indices. Urinalysis revealed pH 5.5, SG 1.013, trace protein, trace blood, and 1+ leukocyte esterase. Urine microscopy demonstrated 5-8 white blood cells/HPF, and numerous sulfadiazine crystals (cover image), which were birefringent with polarization. Kidney biopsy was not obtained as the patient had evidence of crystalline-related kidney injury. Isotonic sodium bicarbonate intravenous fluids were administered to alkalinize the urine and increase urinary flow rates. Kidney function improved and returned to baseline over the next few days. Sulfadiazine is employed in high doses to treat CNS toxoplasmosis in immunocompromised hosts. Risk of precipitation and AKI increases when the urine pH is less than 5.5 the dose of sulfadiazine is 4g/day or higher. Sulfadiazine crystals can assume many shapes, the most common being needle-shaped crystals, rosettes, and those resembling shocks (sheaves) of wheat as seen on the cover. Intrarenal sulfadiazine precipitation may be prevented by maintaining high urinary flow rates (fluid intake above 3 L/day) and alkalinizing the urine to a pH >7.15 (bicarbonate-containing intravenous fluids), which increases sulfadiazine solubility by more than 20-fold. In patients with severe and established AKI, the bicarbonate infusion should be discontinued if the urine pH does not rise above 7.0 after 12 hours or if volume overload or metabolic alkalosis develops. Hemodialysis offers no benefit for the removal of sulfonamide antibiotics. (*Images and text provided by Jose Antonio Tesser Poloni, Elizete Keitel, MD, and Auria Ferreira dos Santos, MD, Irmandade da Santa Casa de Misericórdia de Porto Alegre and Universidade Federal de Ciências da Saúde de Porto Alegre, Porto Alegre, Brazil, and Mark A. Perazella, MD, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, Connecticut*)