Patient Voices

767 COVID-19 Vaccination for Patients Undergoing Long-Term Hemodialysis
Uwe K.H. Koes
See related article on page 843.

769 Medicare Bundled Payment Policy and Anemia Care: Perspectives from a Patient with Kidney Disease
Cher Thomas
See related article on page 851.

Editorials

771 Conflicts of Interest and the Trustworthiness of Clinical Practice Guidelines
Anna Mathew and Catherine M. Clase
See related article on page 819.

774 Safety of SGLT2 Inhibitors in CKD: Walking the Fine Line
Mirela Dobre
See related article on page 835.

777 Fractional Excretion of Sodium (FENa): An Imperfect Tool for a Flawed Question
Harish Seethapathy and Andrew Z. Fenves
See related article on page 785.

779 Clinical Utility of COVID-19 Vaccination in Patients Undergoing Hemodialysis
Matthew J. Oliver and Peter G. Blake
See related article on page 843.

782 International Variation in Time on Peritoneal Dialysis: Time for a Closer Look?
Matthew B. Rivara
See related article on page 861.

Original Articles

Acute Kidney Injury and ICU Nephrology

785 Diagnostic Performance of Fractional Excretion of Sodium for the Differential Diagnosis of Acute Kidney Injury: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis
See related editorial on page 777.

Chronic Kidney Disease

798 Apolipoprotein L1 High-Risk Genotypes and Albuminuria in Sub-Saharan African Populations
Jean-Tristan Brandenburg, Melanie A. Covender, Cheryl A. Winkler, Palwende Romuald Boua, Godfred Agongo, June Fabian, and Michèle Ramsay
809 PCSK9 and Cardiovascular Disease in Individuals with Moderately Decreased Kidney Function
Azin Kheirkhah, Claudia Lamina, Barbara Kollerits, Johanna F. Schachtl-Riess, Ulla T. Schultheiss, Lukas Forer, Peggy Sekula, Fruszina Kotsis, Kar-Uwe Eckardt, and Florian Kronenberg, for the GCKD Investigators

Clinical Nephrology
819 Evaluation of Conflicts of Interest among Participants of the Japanese Nephrology Clinical Practice Guideline
Anju Murayama, Kohki Yamada, Makoto Yoshida, Yudai Kaneda, Hiroaki Saito, Toyoko Sawano, Sunil Shrestha, Rajeev Shrestha, Tetsuya Tanimoto, and Akihiko Ozaki
See related editorial on page 771.

Cystic Kidney Disease
827 Total Kidney Volume Measurements in ADPKD by 3D and Ellipsoid Ultrasound in Comparison with Magnetic Resonance Imaging

Diabetes and the Kidney
835 Fracture Risk of Sodium-Glucose Cotransporter-2 Inhibitors in Chronic Kidney Disease
See related editorial on page 774.

Maintenance Dialysis
843 Severity of COVID-19 after Vaccination among Hemodialysis Patients: An Observational Cohort Study
See related Patient Voice and editorial on pages 767 and 779, respectively.

851 Medicare Bundled Payment Policy on Anemia Care, Major Adverse Cardiovascular Events, and Mortality among Adults Undergoing Hemodialysis
Haesuk Park, Raj Desai, Xinyue Liu, Steven M. Smith, Juan Hincapie-Castillo, Linda Henry, Amie Goodin, Saraswathi Gopal, Carl J. Pepine, and Raj Mohandas
See related Patient Voice on page 769.

861 Variation in Peritoneal Dialysis Time on Therapy by Country: Results from the Peritoneal Dialysis Outcomes and Practice Patterns Study
Mark Lambie, Junhui Zhao, Keith McCullough, Simon J. Davies, Hideki Kawanishi, David W. Johnson, James A. Sloand, Mauricio Sanabria, Talerngsak Kanjanabuch, Yong-Lim Kim, Jenny I. Shen, Ronald L. Pisoni, Bruce M. Robinson, Jeffrey Perl, and the PDOPPS Steering Committee
See related editorial on page 782.

Research Letter
872 Humoral Response to Third Dose of SARS-CoV-2 Vaccines in the CKD Spectrum
Borja Quiroga, María José Soler, Alberto Ortiz, Esther Orero, Sandra Tejedor, Carlos Jesús Jacava Mantecón, Virginia Olinda Gómez Pérez, Antonio José Marín Franco, Christian Allaro Sánchez, Marta Puerta Carretero, María Teresa Jaldó Rodríguez, Manuel Antonio Carnerero Di Riso, Shaara Martínez, Carmen Calderón González, Michal Cervinka, Nicolás Macías Carmona, David Arroyo, Katia M. Pérez del Valle, Gabriel de Arriba, Auxiliadora Mazuecos, Juan Manuel Cazorla, Monica Pereira, Emilio González Parra, María Gabriela Sánchez Martínez, Carolina Lancho Novillo, Carmen Tovos Ruiz, María Cinta Aguilar Cervera, Patricia Muñoz Ramos, Ana Sánchez Horrillo, Isabel Jimeno Martín, Néstor Toapanta, Secundino Cigarrán Culéris, Montserrat Folgueiras López, Rosalía Valero San Cecilio, Blanca Villacorta Linaza, Ignacio Minguela Pesquera, Raquel Santana Estupiñán, Rocío Zamora, Sagrario Soriano, Eduardo Muñoz de Bustillo, María Soledad Pizarro Sánchez, Ana Isabel Martínez Puerto, Alejandra Yagueiras, Laura Muñoz Pacios, Alba Leyva, José Rojas, Ron T. Carnevoort, and Patricia de Sequera, on behalf of SENCOCV collaborative network

Errata
877 Correction: Curcumin Therapy to Treat Vascular Dysfunction in Children and Young Adults with ADPKD: A Randomized Controlled Trial

879 Statement of Clarification: Chronic Kidney Disease from Polyvinylpyrrolidone Deposition in Persons with Intravenous Drug Use
Critical Care Nephrology and Acute Kidney Injury

880 Sepsis Management for the Nephrologist
Sharad Patel, Nitin Puri, and R. Phillip Dellinger

890 Mechanical Circulatory Support: Primer for Consultant Specialists
Christopher W. Tam, Liang Shen, Amanda Dijanic Zeidman, Ankur Srivastava, and Natalia S. Ivascu

Kidney Case Conference: Nephrology Quiz & Questionnaire

902 Hypertension with Kidney Failure
Matthew B. Rivara and Nisha Bansal

Perspectives

905 The Role of Glucagon-Like Peptide 1 (GLP-1) Receptor Agonists in the Prevention and Treatment of Diabetic Kidney Disease: Insights from the AMPLITUDE-O Trial
Kalie L. Tommerdahl, Jessica Kendrick, and Petter Bjornstad

908 Endothelin Receptor Antagonists for Kidney Protection: Lessons from the SONAR Trial
Hiddo J.L. Heerspink and Dick de Zeeuw

Feature

911 Cannabinoids for Symptom Management in Patients with Kidney Failure: A Narrative Review
Hayley Worth, Daniel V. O’Hara, Neeru Agarwal, David Collister, Frank Brennan, and Brendan Smyth

Review

922 Electrolyte and Acid-Base Disorders Associated with Cancer Immunotherapy
Nupur N. Uppal, Biruh T. Workeneh, Helbert Rondon-Berritos, and Kenar D. Jhaveri

On the Cover

What is the diagnosis?
A 14-year-old female presented for medical care with edema and gross hematuria for 7 days. Laboratory examinations showed AKI (creatinine, 4.6 mg/dl) with nephrotic range proteinuria (UACR, 4.3 mg/g) as well as sterile pyuria and glomerular hematuria. Moreover, her serum ANA (>1:3200) and double-stranded DNA were positive with hypocomplementemia (C3, 0.12 g/L; C4, 0.04 g/L) and pancytopenia (white blood cell, 2.78 G/L; Hb, 69 g/L; Plt, 32 G/L). A tentative diagnosis of lupus nephritis was made, and a kidney biopsy was performed.

Image Description:
An enlarged and lobular glomerulus with prominent mesangial and endothelial proliferative features was seen. Marked endocapillary hypercellularity was noted with numerous inflammatory cell infiltrates. More conspicuously, neutrophils were seen migrating to the urinary pole of Bowman’s capsule and into the proximal tubule (outlined by a black line) forming a rudiment of a neutrophil cast (*). (HE staining; magnification, left ×200, right ×400)

Teaching Points:
Sterile pyuria is not uncommon in active glomerulitis or interstitial nephritis, such as acute glomerulonephritis, membranous proliferative glomerulonephritis, lupus nephritis, Kawasaki’s disease, and analgesic nephropathy—and it usually correlates with the activity or the severity of disease. This picture vividly illustrated the forming of noninfectious neutrophil cast in proliferative lupus nephritis, which was originated from the circulated inflammatory cells crossing over the impaired filtration barrier and subsequently surging to the urinary pole of Bowman’s capsule under fluid pressure.

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(Image and text provided by Hua Su, Cheng Wan, and Chun Zhang, Department of Nephrology, Union Hospital, Tongji Medical College, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, China)