

# Empagliflozin and Cardiovascular and Kidney Outcomes across KDIGO Risk Categories

## Post Hoc Analysis of a Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled, Multinational Trial

Adeera Levin,<sup>1</sup> Vlado Perkovic,<sup>2</sup> David C. Wheeler,<sup>2,3</sup> Stefan Hantel,<sup>4</sup> Jyothis T. George,<sup>5</sup> Maximilian von Eynatten,<sup>5</sup> Audrey Koitka-Weber,<sup>5,6,7</sup> and Christoph Wanner<sup>6,7</sup> on behalf of the EMPA-REG OUTCOME Investigators\*

### Abstract

**Background and objectives** In the Empagliflozin Cardiovascular Outcome Event Trial in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus Patients (EMPA-REG Outcome), empagliflozin, in addition to standard of care, significantly reduced risk of cardiovascular death by 38%, hospitalization for heart failure by 35%, and incident or worsening nephropathy by 39% compared with placebo in patients with type 2 diabetes and established cardiovascular disease. Using EMPA-REG Outcome data, we assessed whether the Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcomes (KDIGO) CKD classification had an influence on the treatment effect of empagliflozin.

**Design, setting, participants, & measurements** Patients with type 2 diabetes, established atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, and eGFR  $\geq 30$  ml/min per 1.73 m<sup>2</sup> at screening were randomized to receive empagliflozin 10 mg, empagliflozin 25 mg, or placebo once daily in addition to standard of care. *Post hoc*, we analyzed cardiovascular and kidney outcomes, and safety, using the two-dimensional KDIGO classification framework.

**Results** Of 6952 patients with baseline eGFR and urinary albumin-creatinine ratio values, 47%, 29%, 15%, and 8% were classified into low, moderately increased, high, and very high KDIGO risk categories, respectively. Empagliflozin showed consistent risk reductions across KDIGO categories for cardiovascular outcomes (*P* values for treatment by subgroup interactions ranged from 0.26 to 0.85) and kidney outcomes (*P* values for treatment by subgroup interactions ranged from 0.16 to 0.60). In all KDIGO risk categories, placebo and empagliflozin had similar adverse event rates, the notable exception being genital infection events, which were more common with empagliflozin for each category.

**Conclusions** The observed effects of empagliflozin versus placebo on cardiovascular and kidney outcomes were consistent across the KDIGO risk categories, indicating that the effect of treatment benefit of empagliflozin was unaffected by baseline CKD status.

**Clinical Trial registry name and registration number:** EMPA-REG OUTCOME, NCT01131676

CJASN 15: ●●●–●●●, 2020. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2215/CJN.14901219>

### Introduction

CKD occurs in approximately 40% of patients with type 2 diabetes (1) and leads to a higher risk of mortality and morbidity (2,3). CKD is also a strong risk factor for cardiovascular disease (4). For example, in a large Canadian general population cohort of >900,000 individuals, the proportion of deaths from cardiovascular disease was higher with decreasing eGFR, from 28% in individuals with normal kidney function to 58% in patients with kidney failure (5). As such, treatment of CKD places a major burden on health care systems in terms of resources and costs (6,7). Therefore, there is a strong health and economic imperative to improve clinical outcomes in people with CKD and type 2 diabetes (8). Despite the introduction of novel treatment

strategies for type 2 diabetes, it remains uncertain if these approaches can positively affect the course of cardiovascular and kidney disease in patients with type 2 diabetes (9).

In the Empagliflozin Cardiovascular Outcome Event Trial in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus Patients (EMPA-REG OUTCOME), a large cardiovascular outcome study in patients with type 2 diabetes and established cardiovascular disease (10), the sodium-glucose cotransporter-2 (SGLT2) inhibitor empagliflozin significantly reduced the risk of cardiovascular death by 38%, risk of hospitalization for heart failure by 35% (10), and risk of incident or worsening nephropathy by 39%, and it decreased progression of kidney disease (11). The urinary albumin-

<sup>1</sup>Division of Nephrology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

<sup>2</sup>The George Institute for Global Health, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

<sup>3</sup>Centre for Nephrology, University College London, London, United Kingdom

<sup>4</sup>Boehringer Ingelheim Pharma GmbH & Co. KG, Biberach, Germany

<sup>5</sup>Boehringer Ingelheim International GmbH, Ingelheim, Germany

<sup>6</sup>Department of Diabetes, Central Clinical School, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

<sup>7</sup>Department of Medicine, Würzburg University Clinic, Würzburg, Germany

### Correspondence:

Dr. Adeera Levin, Division of Nephrology, St. Paul's Hospital, University of British Columbia, 1081 Burrard Street Vancouver, BC V6Z 1Y6, Canada. Email: [alevin@providencehealth.bc.ca](mailto:alevin@providencehealth.bc.ca)

creatinine ratio (UACR) also improved, irrespective of baseline UACR levels, although these improvements were of greatest clinical relevance in patients with elevated baseline UACR levels (12).

The Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcomes (KDIGO) CKD classification system provides a two-dimensional framework for categorizing patients on the basis of eGFR and UACR as markers of kidney function and damage (3). These guidelines have evolved over time to include an increasingly detailed description of the relationship between GFR, albuminuria, and prognosis, which has improved our understanding of CKD in multiple populations (3). Patients with low eGFR levels and higher urinary albumin excretion rates are at higher risk of both adverse kidney and adverse cardiovascular outcomes, allowing the KDIGO CKD classification system to be adapted into a risk “heat map” as used in this analysis.

The 2012 KDIGO classification framework is a useful tool for assessing severity of kidney disease. However, it is not known whether this classification system is associated with treatment response. Here, we report a *post hoc* comparison of cardiovascular and kidney outcomes in participants in EMPA-REG OUTCOME using the KDIGO classification to determine the effect of baseline KDIGO risk category on treatment effect.

## Materials and Methods

### Study Design

EMPA-REG OUTCOME was a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, multinational trial (NCT01131676; registration date May 27, 2010). Patients entered a 2-week, open-label, placebo run-in prior to randomization (1:1:1) to empagliflozin 10 mg, empagliflozin 25 mg, or placebo once daily in addition to standard of care for type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular risk management. Randomization was performed with the use of a computer-generated random sequence and interactive voice and web response system, and it was stratified according to the glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c) level at screening (<8.5% or ≥8.5%), body mass index at randomization (<30 or ≥30), kidney function at screening (eGFR of 30–59, 60–89, or ≥90 ml/min per 1.73 m<sup>2</sup>), and geographic region. Investigators were encouraged to treat cardiovascular risk factors in order to achieve optimal standard of care according to local guidelines (10,13).

The EMPA-REG OUTCOME trial was conducted in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and the International Conference on Harmonisation Good Clinical Practice guidelines, and it was approved by local authorities. An independent ethics committee or institutional review board approved the clinical protocol at each participating center. All of the patients provided written informed consent before study entry.

Cardiovascular outcome events and deaths were prospectively adjudicated by clinical events committees. Kidney events were reported by investigators and were not adjudicated. The trial continued until at least 691 patients experienced an adjudicated event included in the primary composite outcome: first occurrence of three-point major adverse cardiovascular event (MACE; composite of cardiovascular death, nonfatal myocardial infarction, or nonfatal stroke). Kidney function at baseline was assessed using the creatinine-based GFR estimating equations on

the basis of the Modification of Diet in Renal Disease (MDRD) formula.

### Participants

Eligible patients were adults with type 2 diabetes (HbA1c ≥7.0% and ≤9.0% for treatment-naïve patients and HbA1c ≥7.0% and ≤10.0% for patients on background glucose-lowering therapy), a body mass index of ≤45 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, established cardiovascular disease, and eGFR ≥30 ml/min per 1.73 m<sup>2</sup> (according to MDRD).

### Outcomes and Analyses

Prespecified cardiovascular outcomes included three-point MACE and its individual components (*i.e.*, myocardial infarction, stroke, and cardiovascular death), hospitalization for heart failure, and all-cause mortality.

Prespecified kidney outcomes have been previously described in detail and included incident or worsening nephropathy (composite of progression to macroalbuminuria, doubling of serum creatinine accompanied by eGFR of ≤45 ml/min per 1.73 m<sup>2</sup>, initiation of KRT, or death from kidney disease) and progression to macroalbuminuria (11). Additionally, a *post hoc* analysis looked at the composite of doubling of serum creatinine, initiation of KRT, or death from kidney disease.

Cardiovascular and kidney outcomes were analyzed in subgroups by baseline KDIGO risk category (3).

Changes in eGFR values were assessed over time alongside a prespecified eGFR slope analysis for three prespecified study periods (treatment initiation effects from baseline to week 4; chronic maintenance treatment effects from week 4 to last value on treatment; and post-treatment effects from last value on treatment to follow-up) (14).

Analyses were performed in patients treated with at least one dose of study drug, and they compared the placebo and pooled empagliflozin groups. A Cox proportional hazards model was used to investigate the consistency of treatment effect on cardiovascular and kidney outcomes across subgroups. The model included terms for age, sex, baseline HbA1c category, baseline body mass index category, geographical region, treatment, baseline KDIGO risk category, and treatment by baseline KDIGO risk category interaction.

Calculation of eGFR slopes within the three prespecified study periods was performed by applying a separate random coefficient model for each period, allowing for random intercept and random slope per patient (14).

Safety data were analyzed by Poisson regression of first event using log of time at risk as offset and including factors for treatment, KDIGO risk category, and treatment by baseline KDIGO risk category interaction, yielding incidence rate ratios to assess differences between the empagliflozin and placebo groups across KDIGO risk categories.

All analyses were performed on a nominal two-sided  $\alpha=0.05$  without adjustment for multiplicity.

## Results

The EMPA-REG OUTCOME trial has been described previously (10,13). A total of 7028 patients were randomized to study treatment from September 2010 to April 2013; 7020 patients at 590 sites in 42 countries received one or more doses of study drug (placebo,  $n=2333$ ; empagliflozin

**Table 1. Baseline characteristics and concomitant medications of participants were similar between treatment groups across Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcomes risk categories**

Parameter	Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcomes Risk Category <sup>a</sup>							
	Low		Moderately Increased		High		Very High	
	Placebo, n=1099	Empagliflozin, <sup>b</sup> n=2223	Placebo, n=675	Empagliflozin, <sup>b</sup> n=1343	Placebo, n=357	Empagliflozin, <sup>b</sup> n=710	Placebo, n=186	Empagliflozin, <sup>b</sup> n=359
Men	787 (72)	1571 (71)	490 (73)	970 (72)	254 (71)	500 (70)	136 (73)	255 (71)
Age, yr	62±9	61±8	64±9	64±9	66±9	66±8	66±8	67±8
BMI, kg/m <sup>2</sup>	30.5±5.2	30.5±5.2	31.0±5.2	30.7±5.3	30.7±5.4	30.6±5.3	30.2±5.3	30.6±5.7
HbA1c, %	8.0±0.8	8.0±0.8	8.1±0.9	8.1±0.9	8.2±0.9	8.2±0.9	8.2±0.9	8.1±0.8
Systolic BP, mm Hg	133±16	132±15	138±17	137±17	139±20	139±19	140±19	141±18
Diastolic BP, mm Hg	77±10	77±9	77±11	77±10	76±11	76±10	76±10	75±10
LDL cholesterol, mg/dl	83±34	85±35	85±34	85±36	89±39	88±37	89±39	90±40
eGFR (MDRD), ml/min per 1.73 m <sup>2</sup>	83±16	84±17	74±20	74±20	60±19	61±20	44±8	43±9
≥60	1099 (100)	2223 (100)	470 (70)	926 (69)	145 (41)	286 (40)	0	0
<60	0	0	205 (30)	417 (31)	212 (59)	424 (60)	186 (100)	359 (100)
<b>UACR, mg/g</b>								
<30	1099 (100)	2223 (100)	205 (30)	417 (31)	76 (21)	139 (20)	2 (1)	10 (3)
30–300	0	0	470 (70)	926 (69)	136 (38)	285 (40)	69 (37)	126 (35)
>300	0	0	0	0	145 (41)	286 (40)	115 (62)	223 (62)
UACR, median (IQR), mg/g	7.1 (4.4–14.1)	8.0 (5.3–14.1)	43.3 (16.8–94.6)	43.3 (17.7–89.3)	141.4 (37.1–630.3)	134.4 (39.8–484.4)	406.2 (110.5–908.8)	422.6 (114.0–1067.0)
<b>Background medications</b>								
ACE inhibitors/ARBs	846 (77)	1754 (79)	556 (82)	1119 (83)	305 (85)	585 (82)	147 (79)	299 (83)
Diuretics	405 (37)	841 (38)	295 (44)	605 (45)	172 (48)	360 (51)	110 (59)	216 (60)
History of heart failure	95 (9)	181 (8)	77 (11)	146 (11)	48 (13)	84 (12)	23 (12)	50 (14)
<b>Smoking status</b>								
Never smoked	464 (42)	902 (41)	260 (39)	556 (41)	144 (40)	288 (41)	80 (43)	164 (46)
Ex-smoker	489 (45)	967 (44)	326 (48)	623 (46)	169 (47)	353 (50)	85 (46)	164 (46)
Currently smokes	146 (13)	354 (16)	89 (13)	164 (12)	44 (12)	69 (10)	21 (11)	31 (9)
<b>Duration of diabetes, yr</b>								
≤1	35 (3)	78 (4)	11 (2)	31 (2)	2 (1)	14 (2)	4 (2)	5 (1)
>1–5	216 (20)	424 (19)	103 (15)	189 (14)	41 (12)	65 (9)	10 (5)	25 (7)
>5–10	301 (27)	597 (27)	159 (24)	344 (26)	69 (19)	156 (22)	35 (19)	64 (18)
>10	547 (50)	1124 (51)	402 (60)	779 (58)	245 (69)	475 (67)	137 (74)	265 (74)
Metformin use	885 (81)	1752 (79)	514 (76)	1022 (76)	219 (61)	476 (67)	104 (56)	172 (48)
Insulin use	447 (41)	933 (42)	338 (50)	648 (48)	211 (59)	412 (58)	130 (70)	232 (65)

BMI, body mass index; HbA1c, glycated hemoglobin; MDRD, Modification of Diet in Renal Disease; UACR, urinary albumin-creatinine ratio; IQR, interquartile range; ACE, angiotensin-converting enzyme; ARB, angiotensin receptor blocker.

<sup>a</sup>Sixty-eight patients were excluded as the subgroup variable was missing.

<sup>b</sup>Pooled. Data are n (%) or mean ± SD unless otherwise indicated.

10 mg,  $n=2345$ ; empagliflozin 25 mg,  $n=2342$ ) (11). The median duration of treatment was 2.6 years (interquartile range, 1.9–3.4), and the median observation time was 3.1 years (interquartile range, 2.2–3.6); 97% of patients completed the trial.

### Baseline Characteristics

The distribution of patients across the KDIGO risk categories is shown in Table 1. Among 7020 participants, baseline eGFR and UACR measurements were available for 6952 patients (99%; empagliflozin,  $n=4635$ ; placebo,  $n=2317$ ). Baseline characteristics and concomitant medications were similar between the placebo and empagliflozin groups across the KDIGO risk categories.

The proportions of patients by KDIGO risk category in the overall study population are shown in Figure 1. As expected, randomization led to similar distributions of all patients between placebo and treatment groups within each KDIGO category (approximately 47%, 29%, 15%, and 8% in each treatment group for the low, moderately increased, high, and very high KDIGO risk categories, respectively).

### Cardiovascular Outcomes Stratified by Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcomes Risk Status at Baseline

The event rates for all outcomes presented were higher with higher KDIGO risk category for both the empagliflozin- and placebo-treated groups (Figure 2). However, for each of the cardiovascular outcomes (three-point MACE; fatal/nonfatal myocardial infarction and fatal/nonfatal stroke cardiovascular death; hospitalization for heart failure; and all-cause mortality), the reductions in risk with empagliflozin versus placebo were consistent for

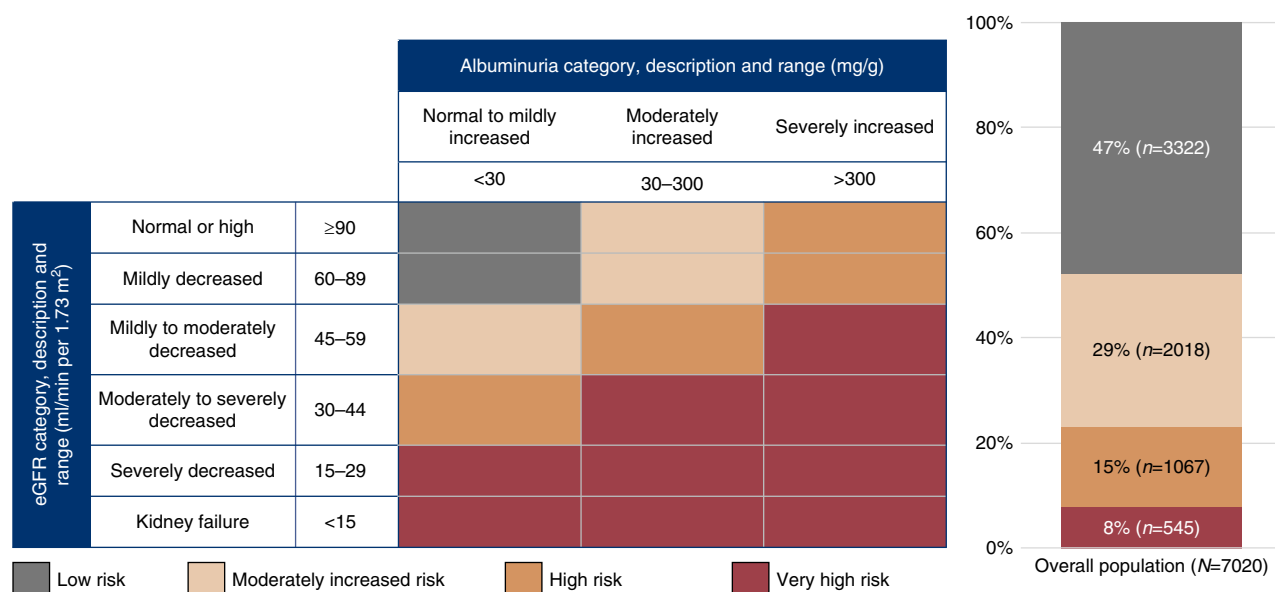
patients with low, moderately increased, high, and very high KDIGO risk category at baseline (the  $P$  values for treatment by subgroup interactions across all cardiovascular outcomes ranged from 0.26 to 0.85) (Figure 2).

### Kidney Outcomes Stratified by Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcomes Risk Status at Baseline

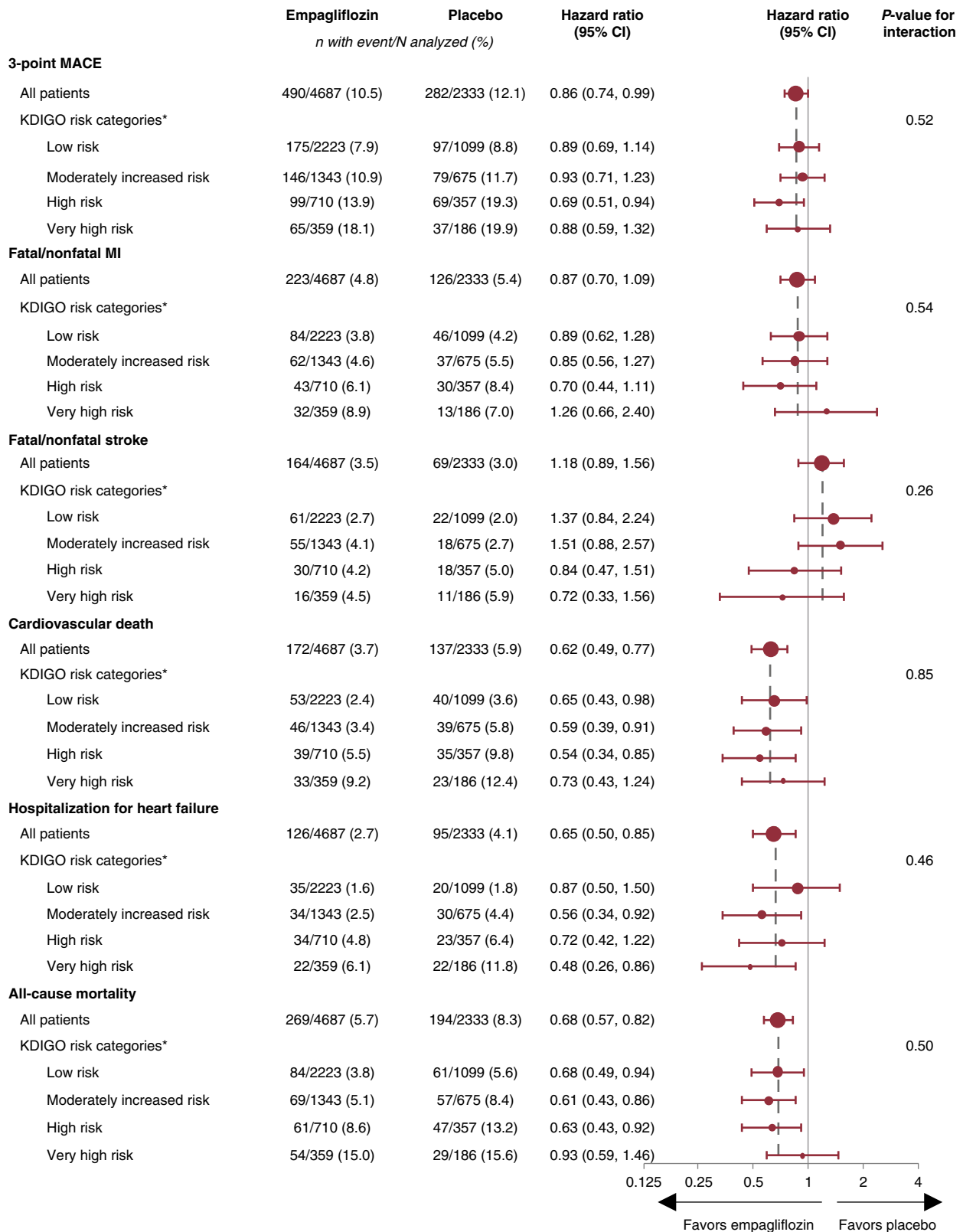
As observed with cardiovascular outcomes, the incidence of kidney outcome events was higher with higher KDIGO risk categories for both the empagliflozin and placebo groups (Figure 3). However, for each of the three kidney outcomes (incident or worsening nephropathy; progression to UACR >300 mg/g; and the composite of hard kidney end points [doubling of serum creatinine, initiation of KRT, or death from kidney disease]), empagliflozin was associated with a consistent and lower relative risk versus placebo across the KDIGO risk categories (the  $P$  values for treatment by subgroup interactions across all kidney outcomes ranged from 0.16 to 0.60) (Figure 3).

### Estimated Glomerular Filtration Rate Slopes

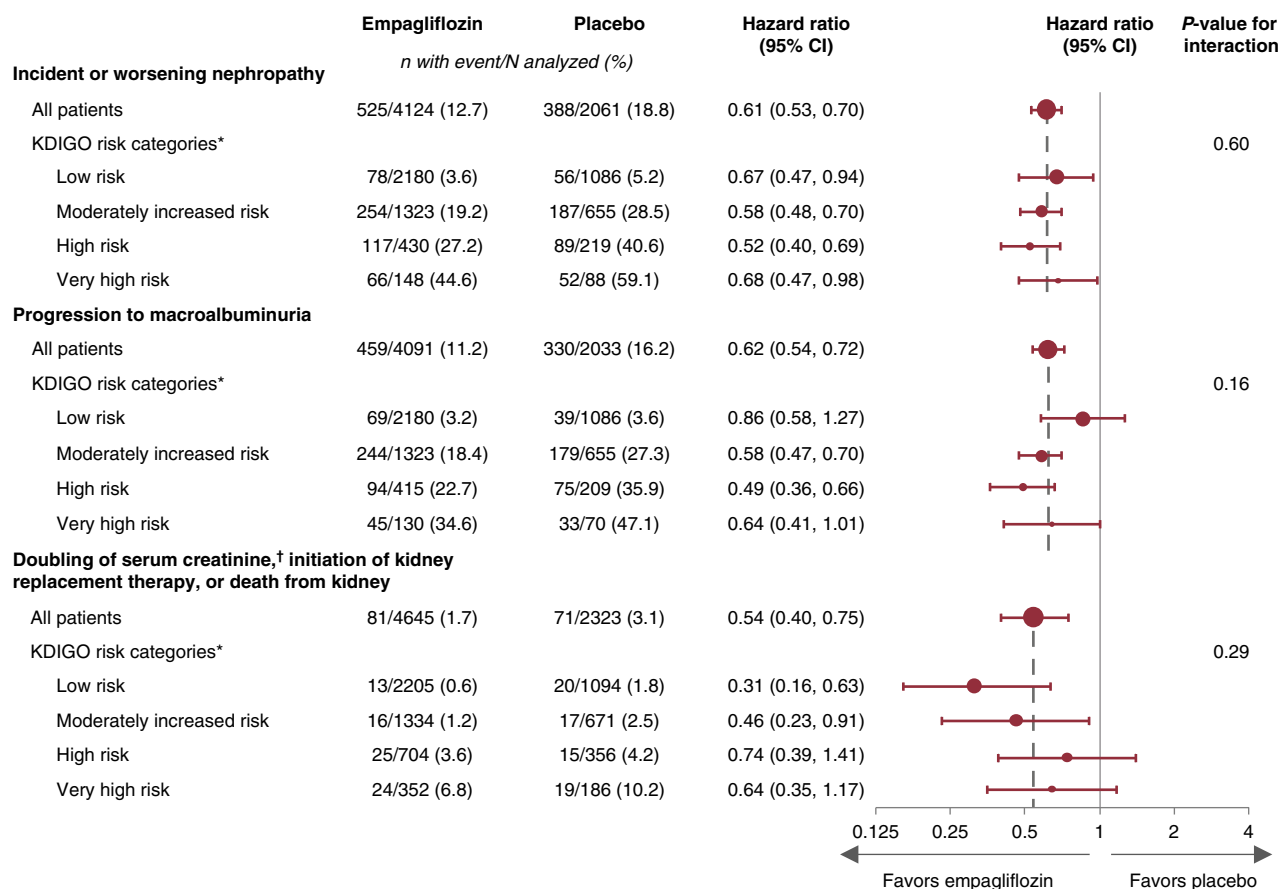
The adjusted mean eGFR slopes for the three prespecified study periods are shown in Figure 4. Over the initial 4 weeks of treatment, the weekly mean adjusted eGFR decrease was numerically greater in the empagliflozin versus placebo groups for all KDIGO risk subgroups. During the chronic maintenance treatment period, however, the annual adjusted change in mean eGFR was stable in all empagliflozin subgroups but declined in the placebo subgroups. Finally, during the post-treatment follow-up, the adjusted mean eGFR in the empagliflozin subgroups increased, whereas little change was observed in eGFR levels in the placebo groups.



**Figure 1. | Proportions of patients by Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcomes (KDIGO) risk category in the overall trial population, showing that almost half of patients (47%) were in the low-risk category.** The KDIGO “heat map” showing prognosis of CKD by GFR and albuminuria category is shown for reference (3). Of all treated patients, baseline eGFR and urine albumin-creatinine ratio measurements were available for 4635 patients on empagliflozin (98.9%) and 2317 patients on placebo (99.3%). Reprinted from ref. 3, with permission.



**Figure 2. | Forest plot showing that the risk reduction of cardiovascular outcomes with empagliflozin versus placebo is consistent across KDIGO risk categories.** \*Sixty-eight patients were excluded as the subgroup variable was missing. 95% CI, 95% confidence interval; MACE, major adverse cardiovascular event; MI, myocardial infarction.



**Figure 3. | Forest plot showing that the risk reduction of kidney outcomes with empagliflozin versus placebo is consistent across KDIGO risk categories.** Cox regression analysis in patients treated with one or more doses of study drug. \*Sixty-eight patients were excluded as the subgroup variable was missing. <sup>†</sup>Accompanied by eGFR $\leq$ 45 ml/min per 1.73 m<sup>2</sup>. Macroalbuminuria: urine albumin-creatinine ratio >300 mg/g.

### Safety

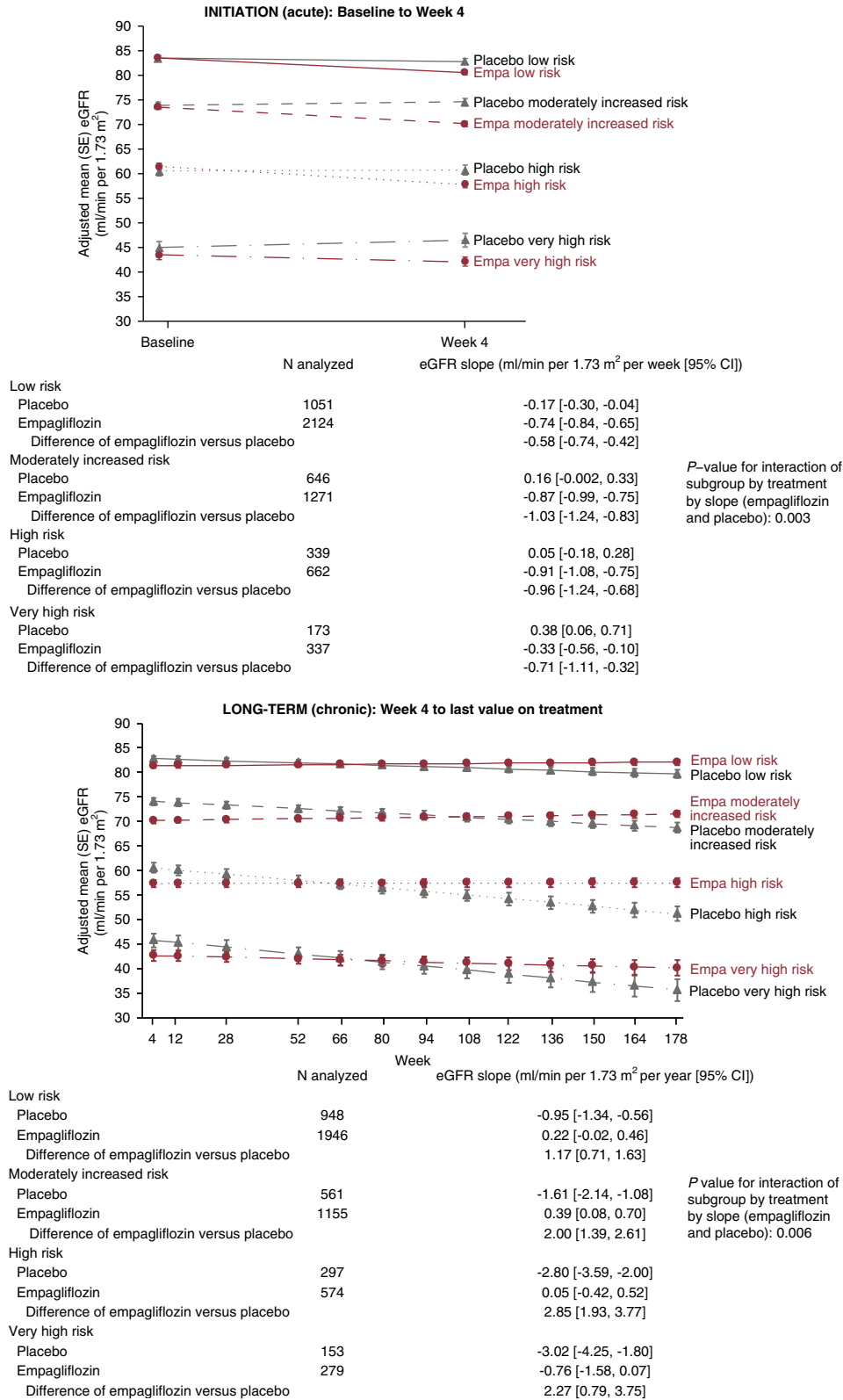
The effect of empagliflozin versus placebo on adverse events by baseline KDIGO risk category, as incidence rate ratios, is shown in Figure 5. The incidence rate ratios were similar for empagliflozin versus placebo across the adverse events assessed, with interaction *P* values of >0.05 for all except for the incidence of any adverse event and hyperkalemia. Except for genital infections, all incidence rates were similar or lower with empagliflozin versus placebo, indicated by the 95% confidence intervals of the incidence rate ratios below or including unity. As reported in other trials of empagliflozin and in trials of other SGLT2 inhibitors, the rates of adverse events consistent with genital infection were greater with empagliflozin than with placebo; this was seen across KDIGO risk categories (Figure 5).

### Discussion

In this *post hoc* analysis of EMPA-REG OUTCOME, the overall numbers of cardiovascular and kidney events were higher with the degree of KDIGO risk categories in both empagliflozin and placebo groups, as reported previously in both diabetic and nondiabetic populations (15). Randomization to empagliflozin versus placebo (both given in addition to standard of care) resulted in a reduction in risk of

cardiovascular outcomes (three-point MACE, cardiovascular death, hospitalization for heart failure, and all-cause mortality). This reduction in risk associated with active treatment was similar in relative terms, irrespective of baseline KDIGO risk category, and consistent with what was previously observed in the overall trial population and across patients with or without prevalent kidney disease at baseline (10,16).

In addition, empagliflozin versus placebo also lowered the risk of incident or worsening nephropathy, progression to UACR>300 mg/g, and the composite of hard kidney end points (doubling of serum creatinine, initiation of KRT, or death from kidney disease). These findings, which were seen across all baseline KDIGO risk categories, support previously reported kidney effects in the overall trial population, as well as across eGFR and albuminuria subgroups (11). The treatment effect of SGLT2 inhibitors on eGFR slopes has been shown to be a viable surrogate for clinical end points in CKD trials (17,18). The acute and chronic eGFR slopes in the EMPA-REG OUTCOME trial have previously been published (14), with similar analyses reported from the Canagliflozin Cardiovascular Assessment Study (CANVAS) and the Canagliflozin and Renal Events in Diabetes with Established Nephropathy Clinical Evaluation (CRENENCE) study (19,20). Given the acute



**Figure 4.** | Empagliflozin consistently slowed the long-term annual decline in eGFR across all patient subgroups regardless of KDIGO risk category, as assessed by mean eGFR (Modification of Diet in Renal Disease [MDRD]) slopes on the basis of random intercept/random coefficient models. Adjusted mean eGFR across subgroups of KDIGO risk category. Empa, empagliflozin.

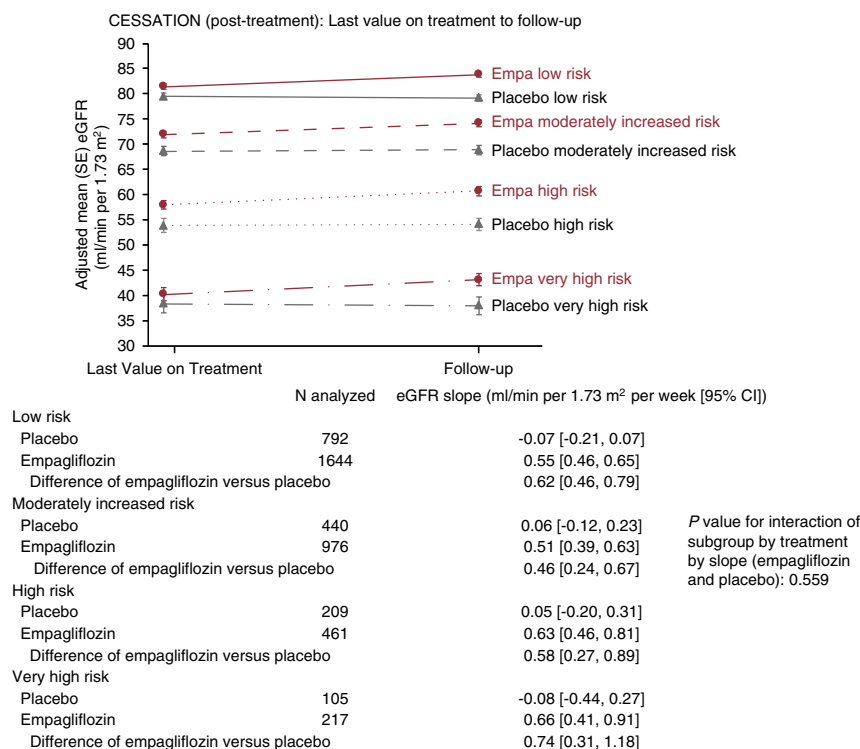


Figure 4. | Continued.

hemodynamic effect of SGLT2 inhibitors, the treatment effect of empagliflozin on eGFR slope by baseline KDIGO risk categories was investigated. We showed that, over the initial 4 weeks of treatment, the weekly mean adjusted eGFR decrease was numerically greater in the empagliflozin versus placebo groups across all risk subgroups; however, during chronic maintenance treatment, the adjusted

mean eGFR stabilized with empagliflozin but declined with placebo. In the post-treatment follow-up phase, the adjusted mean eGFR with empagliflozin returned toward mean baseline eGFR levels, whereas little change was seen with placebo.

The cardiovascular benefits in this study are also in line with more recently reported outcomes from SGLT2 inhibitor trials

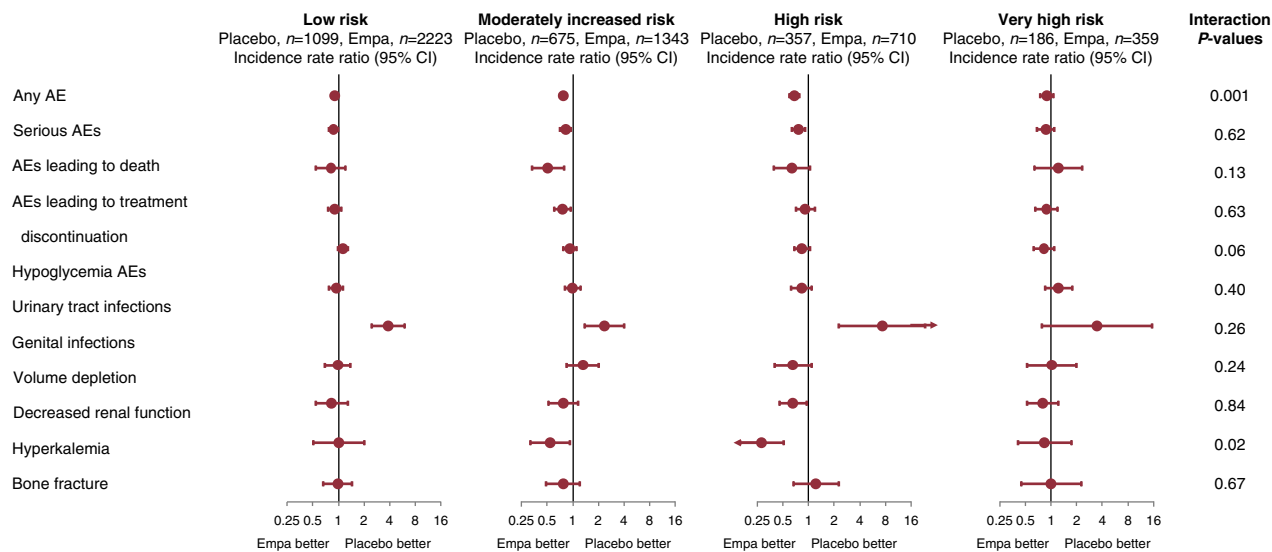


Figure 5. | Adverse event (AE) incidence rate ratios were similar or lower with empagliflozin compared with placebo except for genital infections. Data are from patients treated with one or more doses of study drug, including all events that occurred within 7 days after the last receipt of the study drug. Medical Dictionary for Drug Regulatory Activities version used for reporting: 18.0.



(CANVAS, Multicenter Trial to Evaluate the Effect of Dapagliflozin on the Incidence of Cardiovascular Events) that have shown reduction in the risk of cardiovascular outcomes in patients with high risk of cardiovascular events (19,21). Kidney benefits of canagliflozin were suggested in CANVAS and confirmed in CREDENCE (20). In CREDENCE, improvement in a specified kidney outcome—ESKD, doubling of serum creatinine, or death from kidney disease—was consistent across eGFR and UACR subgroups with canagliflozin versus placebo (20). Furthermore, the positive effects of SGLT2 inhibition are seen in addition to the benefits of background therapy with angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors and angiotensin receptor blockers and so, are particularly important.

In this analysis, the risk reductions seen with empagliflozin versus placebo were similar across the four risk category groups for each of the cardiovascular and kidney outcomes, with no attenuation of effect with higher KDIGO risk categories. The proposed mechanisms by which SGLT2 inhibition may lower the risk of cardiovascular and kidney outcomes are most likely multifactorial and may include improvements in BP control, reduction in total body sodium and water, and weight loss, all of which are associated with improved outcomes in patients with type 2 diabetes. The restoration of tubuloglomerular feedback is likely to be an important contributor to the mechanism of action of the kidney-protective effect of SGLT2 inhibitors, although this is not yet fully understood (22). Additional kidney mechanisms (*e.g.*, tubular protection, reduced hypoxia and inflammation, and long-term effects of natriuresis) may also contribute to these kidney-protective effects (23).

Furthermore, it has been reported that reduction in HbA1c from baseline with empagliflozin was smaller in patients with versus without CKD (24). Similar data have been reported for canagliflozin (25) and dapagliflozin (26). However, the effects of empagliflozin on other cardiovascular parameters, such as systolic BP, were similar regardless of kidney function (24). Attenuation of HbA1c lowering with empagliflozin in patients with CKD is not surprising given its mechanism of action in the kidney (27). A similar finding was reported with canagliflozin (28). Additional research is required to explore the effects of SGLT2 inhibitors on cardiovascular and kidney outcomes in a broader population of patients with CKD, beyond type 2 diabetes. To this end, clinical outcomes trials investigating these agents are underway, including the Dapagliflozin and Prevention of Adverse Outcomes in Heart Failure trial of patients with heart failure and reduced ejection fraction with or without type 2 diabetes. The study included a kidney composite secondary end point, for which no difference between dapagliflozin and placebo was reported (29); this finding was encouraging, although the trial was relatively short (median follow-up 18.2 months). More recently, the Dapagliflozin And Prevention of Adverse Outcomes in Chronic Kidney Disease (DAPA-CKD) (NCT03036150) has investigated the effect of dapagliflozin on kidney and cardiovascular events in a broad range of patients with CKD, importantly including those with and without type 2 diabetes (30). In this regard, although DAPA-CKD and CREDENCE both included patients with albuminuria, DAPA-CKD differs from CREDENCE

as the latter included only patients with type 2 diabetes (20). DAPA-CKD has been stopped early as the treatment benefits of dapagliflozin occurred earlier than anticipated (31). A large clinical outcomes trial investigating empagliflozin for heart and kidney protection in patients with CKD with or without type 2 diabetes, EMPA-KIDNEY, is underway, with plans to enroll approximately 6000 people, including those with and without albuminuria (NCT03594110) (32). The results of these studies will help to further define the role of new treatment therapies in the management of patients with CKD, including the effects on cardiovascular disease and premature death.

The adverse event profile of empagliflozin versus placebo was similar across KDIGO risk categories, with interaction *P* values for incidence rate ratios of  $>0.05$  except for the incidence of any adverse event and hyperkalemia. Except for genital infections, rates of adverse events were similar or lower with empagliflozin versus placebo across all KDIGO risk groups. Rates of adverse events consistent with genital infections, as reported in previous trials of empagliflozin and other SGLT2 inhibitors, were greater with empagliflozin versus placebo across risk categories, with the 95% confidence interval for very high risk crossing unity (interaction *P* value = 0.26).

The limitations of our data include the *post hoc* exploratory nature of the analyses and the relatively low number of patients with advanced CKD: only 8.0% ( $n=186$ ) and 7.7% ( $n=359$ ) of patients on placebo and patients on empagliflozin, respectively, were in the very high KDIGO risk category at baseline. Indeed, this analysis may be underpowered to detect differences in treatment effect across subgroups by virtue of the small proportions of patients in high and very high risk categories. In addition, EMPA-REG OUTCOME was not powered or designed to robustly assess kidney outcomes, and these were not adjudicated. However, the consistency of effect size across various definitions of kidney outcomes, and across SGLT2 trials, suggests that this limitation may be inconsequential (33,34).

Early detection of CKD and appropriate interventions are key to slowing disease progression and reducing the risk of adverse cardiovascular and kidney outcomes. For the small proportion of people with CKD and kidney failure who require dialysis and/or kidney transplantation, the economic effect of these interventions on health care budgets can be disproportionately high (3). Hence, identifying individuals at highest risk early in the disease course would enable earlier referral of those patients who will most likely gain benefit from specialist kidney services. This could lead to greater clinical and economic benefits (3). Furthermore, as CKD is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease, earlier intervention will also reduce the risk of cardiovascular and all-cause mortality. Evidence shows that the clinical presentation of CKD among adults with diabetes in the United States has evolved: low eGFR ( $<60$  ml/min per  $1.73$  m<sup>2</sup>) in the absence of albuminuria (UACR $<30$  mg/g) is becoming the most common phenotype, with an associated higher mortality (35). Therefore, any treatment strategies will also need to address the high mortality rates associated with this trend (35).

In conclusion, the overall number of cardiovascular and kidney events was higher numerically with higher KDIGO risk categories in the empagliflozin and placebo groups. However, the observed cardiovascular and kidney benefits of empagliflozin versus placebo were consistent across KDIGO risk categories, indicating that the treatment benefit of empagliflozin was unaffected by baseline CKD status.

### Disclosures

J. George reports medical writing support from Boehringer Ingelheim during the conduct of the study. He was an employee of Boehringer Ingelheim at the time of the study. S. Hantel is an employee of Boehringer Ingelheim Pharma GmbH & Co. KG. A. Koitka-Weber reports medical writing support from Boehringer Ingelheim during the conduct of the study. She is an employee of Boehringer Ingelheim International GmbH. A. Levin reports grants, nonfinancial support, and other from AstraZeneca; grants, nonfinancial support, and other from Boehringer Ingelheim International GmbH; and grants and other from Janssen during the conduct of the study. She has also received research support from Amgen, AstraZeneca, the Canadian Institute for Health Research, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, Janssen, the Kidney Foundation of Canada, Merck, the Michael Smith Health Research Foundation, and Otsuka. V. Perkovic is currently employed by UNSW Sydney, the Royal North Shore Hospital; reports consultancy agreements with AbbVie, Bayer, Boehringer Ingelheim, Chinook, GlaxoSmithKline, Janssen, and Pfizer; Astellas, AstraZeneca, Bayer, Baxter, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Durect, Eli Lilly, Gilead, GlaxoSmithKline, Janssen, Merck, Mitsubishi Tanabe, Mundipharma, Novartis, Novo Nordisk, Pharmalink, Relypsa, Retrophin, Roche, Sanofi, Servier, and Vitae; reports research funding from Pfizer (supplied drug and seed funding for TESTING trial) and GlaxoSmithKline; reports honoraria from AbbVie, Bayer, Boehringer Ingelheim, GlaxoSmithKline, Janssen, Pfizer; Astellas, AstraZeneca, Bayer, Baxter, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Chinook, Durect, Eli Lilly, Gilead, GlaxoSmithKline, Janssen, Merck, Mitsubishi Tanabe, Mundipharma, Novartis, Novo Nordisk, Pharmalink, Relypsa, Retrophin, Roche, Sanofi, Servier, and Vitae; reports serving or has served on steering committees for trials funded by AbbVie, AstraZeneca, Bayer, Boehringer Ingelheim, Chinook, Eli Lilly, Gilead, GlaxoSmithKline, Janssen, Novartis, Novo Nordisk, and Retrophin; and reports serving as a board director for George Clinical, George Institute, Garvan Institute, Mindgardens Network, Childrens Cancer Institute, and Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute. M. von Eynatten reports medical writing support from Boehringer Ingelheim during the conduct of the study. He was an employee of Boehringer Ingelheim at the time of the study. C. Wanner reports medical writing support from Boehringer Ingelheim during the conduct of the study. He also reports receiving honoraria from Boehringer Ingelheim and Janssen, outside the submitted work. D. Wheeler reports personal fees and nonfinancial support from AstraZeneca; and personal fees from Amgen, Boehringer Ingelheim, Bayer, GlaxoSmithKline, Janssen, MSD, Napp, Mundipharma, Pharmacosmos Reata, and Vifor Fresenius, outside the submitted work. He was a past cochair of KDIGO.

### Funding

The EMPA-REG OUTCOME trial was sponsored by the Boehringer Ingelheim and Eli Lilly and Company Diabetes Alliance.

### Acknowledgments

The authors thank the patients who participated in this trial and Ms. Michaela Mattheus from Boehringer Ingelheim for her

contribution to the statistical analyses. Medical writing assistance, supported financially by Boehringer Ingelheim, was provided by Mr. Charlie Bellinger and Miss Sally Neath of Elevate Scientific Solutions, Horsham, United Kingdom, during the preparation of this article.

Data were presented at the International Society of Nephrology's World Congress of Nephrology held April 21–25, 2017 in Mexico City, Mexico.

### Data Sharing Statement

The sponsor of the EMPA-REG OUTCOME trial (Boehringer Ingelheim) is committed to responsible sharing of clinical study reports, related clinical documents, and patient-level clinical study data. Researchers are invited to submit inquiries *via* the following website: <https://trials.boehringer-ingelheim.com>.

### Supplemental Material

This article contains the following supplemental material online at <http://cjasn.asnjournals.org/lookup/suppl/doi:10.2215/CJN.14901219/-/DCSupplemental>.

Supplemental Material. List of EMPA-REG OUTCOME investigators.

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**Received:** December 4, 2019 **Accepted:** August 24, 2020

A.K.-W. and C.W. contributed equally to this work as senior authors.

\*The list of nonauthor contributors is extensive and has been provided in the supplemental material.

Published online ahead of print. Publication date available at [www.cjasn.org](http://www.cjasn.org).

See related editorial, "SGLT2 Inhibitors across the Spectrum of Severity of CKD," on pages xxx–xxx.

The EMPA-REG OUTCOME Investigators are as follows:

**Argentina:** D. Aizenberg, Centro Médico Viamonte, Capital Federal, BS AS; M. Ulla, ILAIMCEOM, Córdoba, CBA; J. Waitman, Centro Diabetologico Dr Waitman, Córdoba, CBA; L. De Loredó, Hospital Privado - Centro Médico de Córdoba S.A., Parque Velez Sarfield, CBA; J. Farías, H. Fideleff, Sanatorio Güemes, Capital Federal, BS AS; M. Lagrutta, Instituto de Investigaciones Clínicas, Rosario, STA FE; N. Maldonado, Centro Medico de Alta Complejidad, Rosario, STA FE; H. Colombo, Clinica Privada Colombo, Cordoba, CO; F. Ferre Pacora, Centro Médico Colon, Cordoba, CO; A. Wasserman, Fepreva, Buenos Aires, BA; L. Maffei, Consultorios Asociados de Endocrinología e Invest Clínica, Capital Federal, BS AS; **Australia:** R. Lehman, Adelaide Medical Research, Ashford, SA; J. Selvanayagam, Heart and Vascular Institute, Fullarton, SA; M. d’Emden, Royal Brisbane and Womens Hospital; Herston, QLD; **Austria:** P. Fasching, Wilhelminenspital Wien, Wien; B. Paul Weber, LKH Salzburg - St. Johanns-Spital, Salzburg; H. Toplak, Medical University Graz, Graz; A. Luger, Univ.-Klinik für InnereMedizin III, Wien; H. Drexel, Landeskrankenhaus Feldkirch, Feldkirch; R. Prager, Krankenhaus Hietzing mit NZR, Wien; C. Schnack, G. Schernthaner, Krankenanstalt Rudolfstiftung inkl. Semmelweis Frauenklinik, Wien; G. Schernthaner, Univ. Klinik für Innere Medizin II, Wien; E. Fliesser-Görzer, Ordination Dr. Fliesser-Görzer, St. Stefan; S. Kaser, Universitätsklinik Innsbruck, Innsbruck; **Belgium:** A. Scheen, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Liège, Liège; L. Van Gaal, UZA, Edegem; G. Hollanders, Dr. Geert Hollanders, De Pinte; Y. Kockaerts, Ziekenhuis Oost Limburg, Genk; L. Capiiau, Dr. Luc Capiiau, Massemen-Wetteren; A. Chachati, CHR Huy, Huy; A. Persu, M. Hermans, Cliniques Universitaires Saint-Luc, Bruxelles; D. Vantroyen, Huisartsenpraktijk Hygeia, Hasselt; C. Vercammen, Imelda ZH Bonheiden, Bonheiden; P. Van de Borne, Hôpital universitaire Erasme, Bruxelles; K. Benhalima, C. Mathieu, UZ Gasthuisberg, Leuven; F. Lienart, CHU de Tivoli, La Louvière; J. Mortelmans, Private Practice, Oostham; M. Strivay, CHR de la Citadelle - Site Citadelle, Liège; G. Vereecken, Dr Guy Vereecken, Halen; B. Keymeulen, F. Lamkanfi, UZ Brussel, Brussel; **Brazil:** A. Chacra, Hospital São Paulo UNIFESP, Villa Clementino, SP; F. Eliaschewitz, Centro de Pesquisas Clínicas Ltda, Higienópolis, SP; M. Zanella, Hospital do Rim e Hipertensão, Vila Clementino, SP; A. Faludi, M. Bertolami, Instituto Dante Pazzanese De Cardiologia, São Paulo, Brasil; C. Hayashida, Blumenau Serviços Médicos S/C Ltda, Vila Leopoldina, SP; J. Nunes Salles, O. Monte, Salles, Irmandade da Santa Casa de Misericórdia de São Paulo, Vila Albuquerque, SP; M. Dinato, Centro de Pesquisas Clínicas do Hospital Guilherme Álvaro, Boqueirão, ST; E. Manenti, Hospital Mãe de Deus, Porto Alegre, RS; N. Rassi, Hospital Geral de Goiânia, Goiânia, Brasil; A. Halpern, Hospital das Clínicas de Sao Paulo – FMUSP, São Paulo, Brasil; M. Lima Filho, Hospital Electro Bonini Universidade de Ribeirão Preto, Ribeirão Preto, BR; J. Ayoub, Instituto de Molestias Cardiovasculares – IMC, São José do Rio Preto, BR; J. Felicio, Hospital Universitário João de Barros Barreto, Belém, PA; J. Borges, Centro de Pesquisa Clínica do Brasil, Brasília, BR; J. Gross, Centro de Pesquisas em Diabetes, Porto Alegre, RS; J. Sgarbi, Hospital de Clínicas da Faculdade de Medicina de Marília, Marília, BR; R. Betti, Instituto do Coração, São Paulo, Brasil; A. Tiburcio, S. Purisch, Santa Casa de Misericordia de Belo Horizonte, Belo Horizonte, BR; H. Schmid, Irmandade Santa Casa de Misericordia de Porto Alegre, Porto Alegre, BR; M. Takahashi, Universidade Estadual de Maringá, Maringá, BR; M. Castro, Instituto de Pesquisa Clínica e Medicina Avançada, São Paulo, BR; R. Rea, Universidade Federal do Paraná, Curitiba, BR; M. Hissa, Centro de Pesquisas em Diabetes e Doenças, Fortaleza, Brasil; B. Geloneze Neto, Ced Centro de Endocrinologia e Diabetes, Campinas, Brasil; J. Saraiva, Hospital e Maternidade Celso Peirro – PUCCAMP, Campinas, Brasil; **Canada:** S. Henein, SKDS Research Incorporated, Newmarket, ON; H. Lochnan, Ottawa, ON; S.A. Imran, D. Clayton, QEII Health Sciences Centre, Centre for Clinical Research, Halifax, NS; K. Bayly, Mount Royal Family Physicians, Saskatoon, SK; J. Berlingieri, Burlington, ON; P. Boucher, Longueuil, QC; Y. Chan, Niagara Falls, ON; M. Gupta, Brampton, ON; R. Chehayeb, A. Ouellett, ViaCar Recherche Clinique Inc, Longueuil, QC; E. Ur,

Vancouver, BC; V. Woo, Winnipeg, MB; B. Zinman, Toronto, ON; E. St. Amour, Q&T Research Outaouais, Gatineau, QC; Colombia: M. Terront Lozano, UNIENDO Unidad Integral de Endocrinología, Bogotá, **Colombia**; H. Yupanqui Lozano, Dexa-Diab IPS, Bogotá, CO; M. Urina, Fundación del Caribe para la Investigación Biomédica, Barranquilla, Atlántico; P. Lopez Jaramillo, Fundación Oftalmológica de Santander, Floridablanca, CO; N. Jaramillo, CEMDE, Medellín, CO; G. Sanchez, CEQUIN, Armenia, CO; G. Pérez, Cardiolab Ltda., Bogotá, CO; **Croatia**: S. Tusek, Specialized Hospital for Medical Rehabilitation, Krapinske Toplice; G. Mirosevic, V. Goldoni, University Hospital Centre 'Sestre Milosrdnice', Zagreb; D. Jurisic-Erzen, University Hospital Centre Rijeka, Rijeka; A. Balasko, S. Balic, General Hospital Sveti Duh, Zagreb; E. Drvodelic-Sunic, General Hospital Karlovac, Karlovac; S. Canecki Varzic, Clinical Hospital Centre Osijek, Osijek; **Czech Republic**: M. Machkova, CCBR Czech Prague s.r.o., Praha 3; P. Weiner, Diabetology Out Patient Clinic of Hospital Jindrichuv Hradec, Jindrichuv Hradec; J. Lastuvka, Masaryk Hospital, Usti nad Labem; J. Olsovsky, St. Anna Hospital, Brno; **Denmark**: T. Krarup, Bispebjerg Hospital, København NV; M. Ridderstråle, L. Tarnow, T. Welløv Boesgaard, StenoDiabetes Center, Gentofte; A. Sætre Lihn, Regionshospitalet Randers, Randers NØ; P. Christensen, H. Juhl, Slagelse Sygehus, Slagelse; S. Urhammer, Frederiksberg Hospital, Frederiksberg; P. Lund, Forskningscentret Nordsjællands Hospital, Helsingør; **Estonia**: B. Adojaan, Tartu Endocrinology Centre, Tartu; Ü. Jakovlev, East Tallinn Central Hospital, Tallin; R. Lanno, Merelahe Family Doctors Centre, Tallinn; M. Lubi, T. Marandi, Tartu University Hospital, Tartu; T. Marandi, North Estonia Medical Centre Foundation, Tallin; **France**: D. Gouet, HOP Saint Louis, La Rochelle Cedex 1; J. Courrèges, CH Narbonne, Narbonne Cedex; P. Zaoui, Chu de Grenoble, Grenoble; G. Choukroun, Chu Sud, Amiens; C. Petit, Centre Hospitalier Général Sud Francilien, Corbeil Essonnes; L. Formagne, Cabinet Médical, Derval; B. Estour, Hôpital Nord, Saint Prieux en Jarez; P. Mabire, Cabinet Médical, Fleury sur Orne; C. Dagenet, Cabinet Médical, Equeurdreville Haineville; B. Lemarie, Cabinet Médical, Bourg des cotes; S. Clavel, Hôpital Hôtel Dieu, Le Creusot; P. Aure, Cabinet Médical, Angers; P. Remaud, Cabinet Médical, Angers; J. Halimi, CHU de Tours, Tours; S. Hadjadj, Hôpital de Poitiers, Poitiers; T. Couffinhal, Hôpital Cardiologique du Haut Levègue, Pessac; Georgia: S. Glonti, Unimed Ajara LLC, Batumi; D. Metreveli, David Metreveli Medical Centre Ltd., Tbilisi; Z. Lominadze, L&J Clinic, Kutaisi; E. Giorgadze, National Institute of Endocrinology Ltd., Tbilisi; T. Burtchuladze, L. Javashvili, Chemotherapy & Immunotherapy Clinic "Medulla", Tbilisi; G. Kurashvili, R. Kurashvili, National Center for Diabetes Research Ltd., Tbilisi; D. Virsaladze, Medical Centre Medelite Ltd., Tbilisi; L. Nadareishvili, A. Khomasuridze, Zhordania Institute of Human Reproduction, Tbilisi; **United Kingdom**: T. Cahill, The Research Unit, Frome, Somerset; F. Green, NHS Dumfries & Galloway, Dumfries; S. MacRury, Highland Diabetes Institute, Inverness; M. Waldron, A. Middleton, Fowey River Practice, Fowey; J. McKnight, Western General Hospital, Edinburgh; E. Pearson, NHS Tayside, Dundee; M. Butler, Waterloo Medical Centre, Blackpool; M. Choksi, I. Caldwell, Swan Lane Medical Centre, Bolton; I. Farmer, Stanwell Road Surgery, Ashford; N. Wyatt, J. Patrick, The Health Centre, Bradford on Avon; I. O'Brien, NHS Lanarkshire, Wishaw; M. Devers, NHS Lanarkshire, Airdrie, Lanarks; **Greece**: S. Bousboulas, S. Pappas, General Hospital of Nikaia, Nikaia; G. Piaditis, General Hospital of Athens "G. Gennimatas", Athens; A. Vryonidou, "Korgialenio-Benakio", Hellenic Red Cross Hospital, Athens; N. Tentolouris, General Hospital of Athens "Laiko", Athens; K. Karamitsos, General Hospital of Larissa, Larissa; C. Manes, General Hospital "Papageorgiou", Thessaloniki; M. Benroubi, General Hospital of Athens "Polikliniki", Athens; I. Avramidis, General Hospital of Thessaloniki "G. Papanikolaou", Thessaloniki; **Hong Kong**: R. Ozaki, Prince of Wales Hospital, Hong Kong; K. Tan, Queen Mary Hospital, Hong Kong; S. Siu, T. Ip, Tung Wah Eastern Hospital, Hong Kong; C. Tsang, Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital, Hong Kong; **Hungary**: M. Dudas, Bekes County Pandy Kalman Hospital, Gyula; K. Nagy, Synexus Hungary Ltd., Budapest; C. Salamon, Clinfan SMO Ltd., Szekszard; L. Gerö, Semmelweis University, Budapest; J. Patkay, Szent Pantaleon Hospital, Dunaujvaros; A. Tabak, G. Tamas, Semmelweis University, Budapest; F. Juhasz,

CEE Research Kft., Kisvarda; I. Szentpeteri, CRU Hungary Kft., Szikszo; **India:** N. Ghaisas, Shatabbdi Superspeciality Hospital, Nashik, Maharashtra; G. Bantwal, St. Johns Medical College and Hospital, Bangalore; V. Mohan, Dr Mohan's Diabetes Specialities, Chennai; J. Gupta, S. R. Kalla Gastroenterology & General Hospital, Jaipur; N. Sadhu, Shree Krishna Hospital and Heart Care Centre, Ahmedabad, Ahmedabad; A. Kulkarni, Deendayal Memorial Hospital, Pune, Pune; N. Garg, Tagore Hospital and Heart Care Centre, Jalandhar; S. Reddy, Sumana Hospital, Hyderabad; N. Deshpande, Spandan Heart Institute and Research Centre, Nagpur; K. Gutlapalli, Dr. Ramesh Cardiac and Multispecialty Hospital Ltd, Vijaywada; M. Pillai, Lakshmi Hospital, Cochin; R. Premchand, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Secunderabad; M. Badgandi, Manipal Hospital, Bangalore, Karnataka; S. Jain, TOTAL Diabetes Hormone Institute, Indore, Madhya Pra; S. Aravind, DIACON Hospital & Research Center, Bangalore, NA; P. Shamanna, Bangalore Clinisearch, Bangalore; A. Pandey, Heritage Hospital Ltd., Varanasi, UP; S. Gupta, Diabetes Care n Research Centre, Nagpur; **Indonesia:** B. Pramono, Sardjito Hospital, Yogyakarta; H. Dante Saksono, Cipto Mangunkusumo Hospital, Jakarta; P. Agung, Soetomo Hospital, Surabaya; S. Djoko Wahono, Saiful Anwar Hospital, Malang; K. Suastika, Sanglah Hospital, Denpasar, Bali; Y. Tanggo, Rumah Sakit FK UKI, Jakarta; Y. Juwana, Cinere Hospital, Depok; B. Siswanto, Harapan Kita National Cardiovascular Center, Jakarta; Israel: F. Adawi, ZIV Medical Center, Safed; S. Efrati, Assaf Harofeh Medical Center, Zerifin; E. Mazen, Haemek Medical Centre, Afula; A. Bashkin, T. Herskovits, Western Galilee Hospital, Nahariya; A. Jaffe, Hillel Yaffe Medical Center, Hadera; E. Schiff, Bnai Zion Medical Center, Haifa; J. Wainstein, The E. Wolfson Medical Center, Holon; **Italy:** S. Taddei, Dipartimento Medicina Interna, Pisa, IT; A. Aiello, U.O.C. Endocrinologia, Diabetologia e Malattie Metaboliche, Campobasso, IT; M. Arca, Dipartimento di Clinica e Terapia Medica, Roma, IT; P. Calabro, U.O.C. di Cardiologia, Napoli, IT; M. Cignarelli, Dipartimento di Scienze Mediche, Foggia, IT; P. Fioretto, Azienda Ospedaliera di Padova, Padova, IT; G. Marchesini Reggiani, Policlinico "S. Orsola-Malpighi", Bologna, IT; A. Gnasso, A.o. "Mater Domini", Catanzaro, IT; N. Marchionni, A. Marsilii, A.O. "Careggi", Firenze, IT; M. Bucci, A. Mezzetti, Fondazione Università "G. D'Annunzio", Chieti, IT; P. Pozzilli, Area Endocrinologia, Roma, IT; F. Colivicchi, M. Santini, Divisione di Cardiologia, Roma, IT; E. Moro, A. Semplicini, U.O. di Medicina Interna, Venezia, IT; V. Toscano, U.O.C. Endocrinologia, Roma, IT; A. Fucili, Centro per lo Scompensamento Cardiaco, Ferrara, I; **Japan:** S. Monno, Chibanishi General Hospital, Matsudoshi, Chiba; K. Furui, Hanyu General Hospital, Hanyushi, Saitama; S. Higashiue, N. Hiramatsu, Kishiwada Tokushukai Hospital, Kishiwadashi. Osaka; K. Kawamitsu, Okinawa Tokushukai medical corporation, Shimajiri-gun, Okinawa; T. Takenaka, National Hospital Organization Hokkaido Medical Center, Nishi-ku, Sapporoshi, Hokkaido; H. Takahashi, Iryouhoujineiwakai Minamiakatsuka clinic, Mitoshi, Ibaraki; F. Hojo, Kobari General Hospital, Nodashi, Chiba; Y. Onishi, The Institute for Adult Diseases, Chuo-ku, Tokyo; K. Izumino, Fujikoshi Hospital, Toyamashi, Toyama; M. Okubo, Gifu Heart Center, Gifushi, Gifu; Y. Wakida, Daishinkai Medical Corporation Ookuma Hospital, Kita-ku, Nagoyashi, Aichi; Y. Kondo, Clinic Horikawa, Kamigyo-ku, Kyotoshi, Kyoto; K. Hieshima, H. Jinnouchi, Jinnouchi Diabetes Center, Kumamoto-shi, Kumamoto; A. Suzuki, M. Ito, Fujita Health University Hospital, Toyoakeshi, Aichi; **Republic of Korea:** S. Park, Severance Hospital, Seoul, NA; Y. Kim, Asan Medical Center, Seoul; T. Hong, Pusan National University Hospital, Pusan; H. Park, Kyungpook National University Hospital, Daegu; H. Gwon, Samsung Medical Center, Seoul; H. Kim, Seoul National University Hospital, Seoul; K. Kang, S. Lee, Eulji University Hospital, Daejeon; M. Jeong, Chonnam National University Hospital, Gwangju; K. Seung, The Catholic University of Korea, Seoul; D. Lim, Korea University Anam Hospital, Seoul; S. Rha, Korea University Guro Hospital, Seoul; S. Tahk, Ajou University Hospital, Suwon; J. Yang, National Health Insurance Service Ilsan Hospital, Goyang; J. Yoon, Wonju Severance Christian Hospital, Wonju; M. Shin, Gachon University Gil Medical center, Incheon; D. Kim, Inje University Haeundae Paik Hospital, Busan; J. Jeong, Chungnam National University Hospital, Daejeon; **Malaysia:** N. Nik Ahmad, Hospital Tengku Ampuan Afzan, Pahang; N. Mustafa, Pusat Perubatan

University, Kuala Lumpur; W. Wan Mohamed, Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia, Kelantan; Y. Fung, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Kota Kinabalu; R. Abdul Ghani, A. Chandramouli, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Selangor; K. Chee, University Malaya Medical Centre, Kuala Lumpur; K. Abdul Kadir, Monash University (Sunway Campus), Selangor Darul Ehsan; K. Ling, Hospital Sultanah Aminah, Johor Bahru; M. Abu Hassan, Hospital Sultanah Bahiyah, Kedah; S. Foo, Hospital Selayang, Selangor; **Mexico:** P. Garcia Hernandez, Hospital Universitario de Nuevo Leon, Monterrey, NL; C. Aguilar-Salinas, Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Médicas y Nutrición, Distrito Federal, Mex; M. Vidrio Velazquez, Unidad de Investigacion Clinica Cardiometabolica, Colonia Americana, Gua; F. Flores, Hospital Dr. Angel Leaño, Los Robles, Mex; M. Alpizar Salazar, Centro Especializado de Diabetes, Reforma Social, Mex; D. Micher Escalante, M. Garcia Soria, Clinical Research Institute, San Lucas tepetlcalco, Mex; E. Cardona Muñoz, ICLE SC, Ladron de Guevara, MEX; **Netherlands:** G. Storms, St. Antonius Ziekenhuis, Utrecht; N. Schaper, Maastricht UMC1 (UM en azM werken samen onder de naam Maastricht UMC1), Maastricht; A. Kooy, Bethesda Ziekenhuis, Hoogeveen; M. Krekels, Orbis Medisch Centrum, Geleen; T. Bommel van, R. Verhoeven, Gelre Ziekenhuizen Apeldoorn, Apeldoorn; H. Mulder, Rotterdam Research Institute, Rotterdam; P. Oldenburg-Ligtenberg, Meander Medisch Centrum, locatie Amersfoort Lichtenberg, Amersfoort; F. Gonkel, Ropcke-Zweers Ziekenhuis, Hardenberg; A. Jong de, Huisartsenpraktijk De Hooge Boom, Hoogwoud; J. Soest van, Huisartsenmaatschap LSV, Nijverdal; P. Viergever, Gemini Ziekenhuis, Den Helder; H. Mevissen, Huisartsenpraktijk Wildervank, Wildervank; G. Lochorn, Medisch Centrum Gorecht, Hoogezand; G. Zwiers, Vlietland Ziekenhuis, Schiedam; P. Hoogslag, DiaconessenhuisMeppel, Meppel; E. Ronner, Reinier de Graaf Gasthuis, Delft; P. Nierop, Sint Franciscus Gasthuis, Rotterdam; N. Al – Windy, Gelre Ziekenhuizen locatie Zutphen, Zutphen; J. Kragten, Atrium Medisch Centrum, locatie Heerlen, Heerlen; P. Dekelver, Huisartsenpraktijk Dekelver, Baarle - Nassau; **New Zealand:** J. Benatar, Auckland City Hospital, Grafton / Auckland; J. Krebs, Wellington Hospital, Wellington; R. Scott, Christchurch Hospital Campus, Christchurch; **Norway:** E. Heggen, Oslo Universitetssykehus HF, Oslo; A. Berz, Medisinsk Senter Fornebu, Fornebu; C. Fossum, Sykehuset Innlandet HF, Gjøvik; U. Hurtig, Sykehuset Innlandet HF, Avd. Tynset, Tynset; G. Langslet, Oslo Universitetssykehus HF, Oslo; M. Baranowski, Intern Medic, Trondheim; J. Sparby, Sykehuset Innlandet HF, Kongsvinger, Kongsvinger; T. Karlsson, Dr. Thomas Karlsson, Kløfta; **Peru:** C. Delgado Torres, Instituto Delgado de InvestigacionMedica, Arequipa, PE; A. Rodriguez Escudero, Hospital Alberto Sabogal Sologuren, Bellavista, PE; R. Lisson, Hospital Nacional Edgardo Rebagliati Martins, Jesus Maria, Lima; A. Allemant Maldonado, Hospital Nacional Hipólito Unanue, El Agustino, PE; W. Gallardo Rojas, Instituto Medico Miraflores, Miraflores, PE; L. Gonzales Bravo, Clinica Medica San Martin, Ica, PE; J. Lema Osoreo, Hospital Nacional Arzobispo Loayza, Lima, PE; J. Farfan, Instituto Endocrinologico Farfan, Arequipa, PE; L. Zapata, Casa de Diabetes & Nutrición, Lima, PE; J. Godoy Junchaya, Hospital Nacional Daniel Alcides Carrión, Lima, PE; Y. Roldan Concha, J. Urquiaga Calderon, Centro de Investigación Heart Help, Lima, LI; **Philippines:** R. Sy, Cardinal Santos Medical Center, Manila; G. Tan, Cebu Doctors University Hospital, Cebu; G. Aquitania, Philippine Nikkei Jin Kai Polyclinic and Diagnostic Center, Davao; G. De Los Santos, Metropolitan Medical Center, Manila; A. Panelo, UERM-Institute for Studies on Diabetes Foundation, Inc, Marikina City; O. Roderos, De La Salle University Medical Center, Cavite City; R. Rosales, Metropolitan Medical Center, Manila; R. Toledo, Señor Santo Niño Hospital, Tarlac; A. Liwag, West Visayas State University Medical Center, Jaro Iloilo City; H. Ramoncito, Amang Rodriguez Medical Centre, Marikina City; **Poland:** E. Skokowska, NZOZ Przychodnia Specjalistyczna “Medica”, Lublin; E. Krzyzagska, Private Practice Dr. Ewa Krzyzagska, Poznan; M. Ogorek, NZOZ All-Med Medical Centre, Lodz; L Wojnowski, Citomed Sp. Z.o.o., Torun; J. Spyra, Specialized Practice Dr. Janusz Spyra, Ruda Slaska; M. Konieczny, Specialized Physician’s Office Ko-Med, Pulawy; W. Piesiewicz, Medical Centre Hospital Swietej Rodziny, Lodz; W. Kus, Individual Specialized Practice, Lodz; A. Ocicka-Kozakiewicz, Non-Public HealthCare Center “Nasz Lekarz”, Torun; E. Orłowska-Kunikowska, University Clinical Center, Gdansk;



W. Zmuda, Oswiecimskie Centrum Badan Klinicznych Medicome Sp. z o.o., Oswiecim; **Portugal**: S. Duarte, Centro Hospitalar Lisboa Ocidental, Lisboa; A. Leitão, Centro Hospitalar Lisboa Central, Lisboa; P. Monteiro, Hospitais da Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra; H. Rita, Unidade de Saúde do Litoral Alentejano, EPE, Santiago do Cacém; V. Salgado, Hospital Fernando Fonseca, Amadora; L. Pinto, Centro Hospitalar de Leiria-Pombal, EPE, Leiria; J. Queirós, Hospital de São João, Porto; J. Teixeira, Unidade Local de Saúde do Alto Minho, Viana do Castelo; C. Rogado, R. Duarte, APDP- Associação Protectora dos Diabéticos de Portugal, Lisboa; F. Sobral do Rosário, Hospital da Luz, Lisboa; A. Silva, Centro Hospitalar do Algarve, EPE, Faro; L. Andrade, Centro Hospitalar de Vila Nova de Gaia/Espinho, Vila Nova de Gaia; M. Velez, Centro Hospitalar Médio Tejo, EPE, Torres Novas; M. Brazão, Serviço Região Autónoma da Madeira, EPE, Funchal, Madeira; **Romania**: O. Istratoaie, SC Cardiocenter Dr. Istratoaie SRL, Craiova; R. Lichiardopol, Institute of Diabetes Nutrition and Metabolic Diseases, Bucharest; D. Catrinou, County Clinical Hospital, Constanta; C. Militaru, S.C. Cardiomed S.R.L, Craiova; C. Zetu, Institute of Diabetes Nutrition and Metabolic Diseases, Bucharest; D. Barbonta, SC Diana Barbonta SRL, Alba Iulia; D. Cosma, Pelican Impex SRL, Cabinet Nr. 15, Oradea; C. Crisan, RAI Medicals SRL, Mediab SRL, Targu-Mures; L. Pop, Cabinet Med. Individual Diabet, Nutritie, Boli Metabolice Private Practice Dr. Lavinia Pop, Baia Mare Maramures; **Russia**: V. Esip, Saint Petersburg State Healthcare Institution, St. Petersburg, F. Khetagurova, A. Petrov, Vsevolozhsk Central Regional Hospital, Vsevolozhsk; G. Arutyunov, City Clinical Hospital No. 4, Moscow; M. Boyarkin, City Alexander Hospital St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg; A. Agafyina, Saint-Petersburg GUZ "City Clinical Hospital #40, Saint Petersburg; N. Vorokhobina, St. Petersburg GUZ City Clinical Hospital of Saint Elizabeth, St. Petersburg; N. Petunina, City Clinical Hospital No. 67, Moscow; I. Libov, Moscow GUZ City Clinical Hospital named after S.P. Botkin, Moscow; A. Zalevskaya, Autonomous nonprofit organization, St. Petersburg; K. Nikolaev, City Clinical Hospital No. 19, Novosibirsk; O. Barbarash, Heart & Vessels Diseases complex problems, Kemerovo; V. Potemkin, Moscow GUZ City Clinical Hospital No. 68, Moscow; A. Bystrova, E. Krasilnikova, St. Petersburg State Medical Univ. n.a. I Pavlov Roszdrava, St. Petersburg; V. Barbarich, City Clinical Hospital No. 1, Novosibirsk; G. Chumakova, Altai State Medical University, Barnaul; N. Tarasov, Medicosanitary Unit of Main Dept. of Internal Affairs, Kemerovo; T. Meleshkevich, Central Clinical Hospital No. 2, Moscow; D. Zateyshchikov, City Hospital No. 17, Moscow; O. Lantseva, St-Petersburg State Healthcare Institution, St. Petersburg; D. Belenkiy, MUZ Novosibirsk Municipal Clinical Hospital of Emergency No. 2, Novosibirsk; A. Obrezan, LLC International Medical Center SOGAZ, Saint Petersburg; L. Rossolko, City Polyclinic No. 120, Saint Petersburg; E. Phillipova, LLC Medinet, Saint Petersburg; P. Yakhontova, Novosibirsk Regional Clinical, Novosibirsk; A. Khokhlov, MUZ Clinical Hospital #2, Yaroslavl; **Singapore**: R. Tan, National Heart Center, Singapore; C. Sum, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, **Singapore**; H. Chang, Singapore General Hospital, Singapore; **South Africa**: L. Distiller, Centre For Diabetes and Endocrinology, Houghton; M. Pretorius, Tiervlei Trial Centre, Bellville; H. Nortje, Dr H. Nortje, Goodwood; E. Mitha, Newtown Clinical Research Centre, Newtown; L. Burgess, Tread Research, Parow; S. Blignaut, Paarl Research Centre, Paarl; T. Venter, Cardiology Clinical Research, Alberton; R. Moodley, Dr. Moodley and Dr. Sarvan, Tongaat; J. Lombaard, Josha Research Centre, Bloemfontein; U. Govind, Dr U. Govind, Sydenham; V. Naidoo, Durban, KZN; M. Mookadam, Langeberg Clinical Trials, Cape town, WC; J. Engelbrecht, Vergelegen Medi-Clinic, Somerset West; M. Omar, Centre for Diabetes and Endocrinology, Durban; J. Jurgens, DJW Navorsing, Krugersdorp; G. Podgorski, Greenacres Hospital, Port Elizabeth; H. Vawda, D. Naidoo, Cardiology Research Clinic, Durban, KZN; S. Emanuel, Synopsis Research, Cape Town, WC; A. Roodt, Clinresco Centre (Pty) Ltd, Kempton Park, GAU; A. Amod, Medical Centre, Chatsworth Unit 10, KZN; L. Van zyl, Clinical Projects Research, Worcester, WC; **Spain**: J. Segura, Hospital 12 de Octubre, Madrid; M. Brito, Hospital Universitario Puerta de Hierro, Mahadahonda (Madrid); A. Fernandez-Cruz, Hospital Clínico Universitario San Carlos, Madrid; S. Artola, Centro de Salud Maria Jesus Hereza, Leganes (Madrid); R.

Iglesias, Centro de Salud Pedro Lain Entralgo, Alcorcon (Madrid); E. Toural, Centro de Salud Lavapies, Madrid; L. Garcia-Ortiz, Centro de Salud La Alamedilla, Salamanca; J. Saban, Hospital Universitario Ramon y Cajal, Madrid; J. Mesa, Hospital Vall d’Hebron, Barcelona; J. Vidal, Hospital Clinic i Provincial de Barcelona, Barcelona; J. Linares, Clinica Inmaculada Concepcion, Granada; F. del Cañizo, Hospital Infanta Leonor, Madrid; M. Rigla, Corporacio Sanitaria Parc Tauli, Sabadell (Barcelona); C. Suarez, Hospital Universitario La Princesa, Madrid; I. Llorente, Hospital Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria, Santa Cruz de Tenerife; B. Moreno, Hospital General universitario, Madrid; A. Antoli, F. Gomez Peralta, Hospital Nuestra Señora de Sonsoles, Avila; M. Iglesias, CAP Badía del Vallès, Badía del Vallès – Barcelona; F. Gomez-Peralta, Hospital General de Segovia, Segovia; V Pereg, Hospital Son Espases, Palma de Mallorca; L. de Teresa, Instituto de Ciencias Médicas, Alicante; M. Camafort, Hospital Clinic i Provincial de Barcelona, Barcelona; C. Trescoli, Hospital de la Ribera, Alzira, Valencia; **Sri Lanka:** R. Satarasinghe, Sri Jayewardenepura General Hospital & PGMI, Nugegoda; N. Somasundaram, National Hospital, Colombo; S. Siyambalapitiya, Colombo North Teaching Hospital, Ragama; C. Antonypillai, Diabetes and Endocrine Unit, Kandy; D. Bulugahapitiya, Diabetes Clinic, Kalubowila; U. Medagama, Teaching Hospital Peradeniya, Kandy; **Taiwan:** C. Huang, Chung Shan Medical University Hospital, Taichung; Y. Lu, E-DaHospital, Kaohsiung; J. Hwang, National Taiwan University Hospital, Taipei; C. Chiang, Taipei Veterans General Hospital, Taipei; M. Wen, Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, Linkou, Taoyuan; J. Chen, National Cheng Kung University Hospital, Tainan; W. Lai, Kaohsiung Medical University Hospital, Kaohsiung; K. Chang, China Medical University Hospital, Taichung; J.Wang, Buddhist Tzu Chi General Hospital, Hualien; H. Yeh, Mackay Memorial Hospital, Tamsui, Taipei County; Thailand: P. Kriangsak, Udonthani Hospital, Muang District; C. Deerochanawong, Rajavithi Hospital, Bangkok; S. Suwanwalaikorn, King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital, Bangkok; A. Mangklabruks, Maharaj Nakorn Chiangmai Hospital, Chiang Mai; P. Kaewsuwanna, Maharat Nakhon Ratchasima Hospital, Nakhonratchasima; D. Piyayotai, Thammasat University Hospital, Pathum Tani; **Ukraine:** M. Iabluchanskyi, Clinical Hospital No. 5, Kharkov; O. Samoylov, Scientific Center of Radiation, Kiev; O. Godlevska, City Clinical Hospital of Emergency Care, Kharkov; O. Kovalyova, Kharkiv City Hospital No. 3, Kharkiv; O. Voloshyna, Odessa State Medical University, Odessa; V. Tseluyko, City Clinical Hospital No. 8, Kharkiv; S. Zotov, I. Vykhovanyuk, Clinic for Cardiology “Sertse i sudynny” LTD, Kiev; **United States of America:** A. Dulgeroff, High Desert Medical Group, Lancaster, CA; R. Mayfield, Mountain View Clinical Research, Greer, SC; M. Zaniewski-Singh, Michelle Zaniewski, M.D., PA, Houston, TX; J. Ullal, J. Aloï, The Strelitz Diabetes Center, Norfolk, VA; R. De La Rosa, Four Rivers Clinical Research, Paducah, KY; J. Mosely, B. Wittmer, Commonwealth Biomedical Research LLC, Madisonville, KY; S. Aronoff, Research Institute of Dallas, Dallas, TX; J. Rosenfeld, M. Seidner, Green and Seidner Family Practice, Lansdale, PA; M. Warren, Physicians East, PA, Greenville, NC; N. Fishman, Diabetes and Endocrine Specialists Inc, Chesterfield, MO; R. Weiss, Maine Research Associates, Auburn, ME; A. Arif, Apex Medical Research, Flint, MI; M. Sandberg, Westcott Medical Center, Flemington, NJ; D. Lewis, Arkansas Primary Care Clinics, Little Rock, AK; E. Ball, Walla Walla Clinic, Walla Walla, WA; R. Graf, MultiCare Specialties Research, Tacoma, WA; C. Breton, International Research Associates, LLC, Miami, FL; R. Tamayo, Genesis Research International, Longwood, FL; R. Richards, W. Cefalu, G. Uwaifo, Louisiana State University, New Orleans, LA; D. Zayour, J. Hoffman, Via Christi Clinic, PA, Wichita, KS; D. Fitz-Patrick, East-West Medical Research, Honolulu, HI; B. Khan, Atlanta Clinical Research Center, Atlanta, GA; K. Blaze, South Broward Research, Pembroke Pines, FL; P. Bressler, North Texas Endocrine Center, Dallas, TX; S. Halpern, D. Chappell, Radiant Research, Inc, Santa Rosa, CA; R. Bergenstal, R. Cuddihy, G. Matfin, International Diabetes Center, Minneapolis, MN; Z. Freedman, Endocrine-Diabetes Care and Resource Center, Rochester, NY; J. Gonzalez-Campoy, Minnesota Center for Obesity, Metabolism, & Edocrinology, PA, Eagan, MN; S. Lerman, The Center for Diabetes and Endocrine Care, Ft. Lauderdale, FL; M. Rendell, Creighton University School of Medicine Diabetes Center, Omaha, NE; S. Sitar, Orange County

Research Institute, Anaheim, CA; M. Reeves, Michael L. Reeves, MD, Chattanooga, TN; T. Howard, Medical Affiliated Research Center, Inc, Huntsville, AL; J. Soufer, Chase Medical Research, LLC, Waterbury, CT; B. Miranda-Palma, University of Miami/ Diabetes Research Institute, Miami, FL; A. Laliotis, Integrated Research Center, San Diego, CA; M. Shomali, Union Memorial Hospital Diabetes and Endocrine Center, Baltimore, MD; M. Teltser, A & R Research Group, LLC, Pembroke Pines, FL; D. Hurley, Medical Research South, LLC, Charleston, SC; E. Morawski, Holston Medical Group, Kingsport, TN; R. Cherlin, Richard Cherlin, MD, Los Gatos, CA; V. Houchin, Harrisburg Family Medical Center, Harrisburg, AR; M. Welch, D. Goytia-Leos, Consano Clinical Research, San Antonio, TX; M. Syed, Illumina Clinical Associates, Indiana, PA; E. Kowaloff, L. Weinrauch, Atlantic Clinical Trials, LLC, Watertown, MA; J. Peniston, Avington Memorial Hospital, Feasterville Trevose, PA; A. Brockmyre, Holston Medical Group, Bristol, TN; B. First, Ritchken & First MD's, San Diego, CA; L. Feld, Horizon Clinical Research Associates, Gilbert, AZ; D. Huffman, University Diabetes & Endocrine Consultants, Inc, Chattanooga, TN; O. Nassim, Clinical Research, Inc, Huntington Park, CA; G. Gottschlich, New Horizons Clinical Research, Cincinnati, OH; A. Patel, C. Knopke, Integrated Research Group, Inc, Riverside, CA; M. Hernandez, Berma Research Group, Hialeah, FL; J. Diaz, The Community Research of South Florida, Hialeah, FL; G. Giugliano, J. Nicasio, Baystate Medical Center, Springfield, MA; D. Eagerton, Carolina Health Specialists, Myrtle Beach, SC; R. Huntley, Norwalk Medical, Norwalk, CT; J. Reed, III, Endocrine Research Solutions, Inc, Roswell, GA; M. Magee, MedStar Health Research Institute, Washington, DC; R. Hippert, Integrated Medical Group PC, Fleetwood, PA; C. Sofley, Jr., Internal Medicine Associates of Anderson, PA, Anderson, SC; O. Alzohaili, Alzohaili Medical Consultants, Dearborn, MI; P. Levins, R. Anspach, Clinical Research Advantage, Inc, Phoenix, AZ; S. Shah, St. Joseph's Medical Associates, Stockton, CA; O. Brusco, Osvaldo Brusco, MD, Corpus Christi, TX; J. Naidu, Naidu Clinic, Odessa, TX; J. Lindenbaum, Jeffrey Lindenbaum DO, PC, Yardley, PA; R. Jacks, Hill County Medical Associates, New Braunfels, TX; G. Hammond, Dormir Clinical Trials, Inc, Midvale, UT; C. Arena, Utah Clinical Trials, LLC, Salt Lake City, UT; K. Saxman, Oregon Medical Group Adult Medicine Clinic, Eugene, OR; M. Mach, Valley Endocrine & Diabetes Consultants, Inc, Valencia, CA; H. Kerstein, Howard Kerstein, MD, Denver, CO; D. Kereiakes, The Carl and Edyth Linder Center For Research and Education, Cincinnati, OH; J. Wahlen, Advanced Research Institute, South Ogden, UT; K. Wehmeier, UF Endocrinology & Diabetes, Jacksonville, FL; L. Chaykin, Meriden Research, Bradenton, FL; J. Rothman, University Physicians Group, Staten Island, NY; L. Fogelfeld, John H. Stroger Jr, Hospital of Cook County, Chicago, IL; N. Bittar, Gemini Scientific, LLC, Madison, WI; J. Rosenstock, Dallas Diabetes and Endocrine Center, Dallas, TX; D. Kayne, Medical Group of Encino, Encino, CA; J. Navarro, Genesis Clinical Research, Tampa, FL; H. Colfer, Nisus Research, Petoskey, MI; S. Mokshagundam, Robley Rex VA Medical Center, Louisville, KY; L. Shandilya, Ettrick Health Center, PA, South Chesterfield, VA; L. Connery, Lion Research, Norman, OK; C. Wysham, Rockwood Diabetes and Metabolic Health Center, Spokane, WA; A. Dela Llana, MediSphere Medical Research Center, LLC, Evansville, IN; M. Jardula, Desert Oasis Healthcare, Palm Springs, CA; M. MacAdams, Lubbock Diagnostic Clinic, Lubbock, TX; G. Flippo, Alabama Clinical Therapeutics, LLC, Birmingham, AL; E. Heurich, C. Curtis, Compass Research, Orlando, FL; D. Sanders, R. Rawls, Horizon Research Group, Inc, Mobile, AL; F. Velazquez, Pioneer Research Solutions, Inc, Houston, TX; E. Osea, Innovative Clinical Research, Inc, Harbor City, CA; K. Mahood, Family Medicine of Sayebrook, Myrtle Beach, SC; G. Feldman, South Carolina Pharmaceutical Research, Spartanburg, SC; F. Eder, United Medical Associates, Binghamton, NY; E. Riley, IV, W. Fowler, Tower Pointe Research Center, Hodges, SC; M. Jain, Southwest Clinical Research Centers, LLC, Pearland, TX; M. Shepard, Medstar Research Institute, Hyattsville, MD; M. Shear, Dayton Clinical Research, Dayton, OH; B. Barker, Delaware Research, Delaware, OH; C. Strout, Coastal Carolina Research Center, Mt. Pleasant, SC; O. Obiekwe, Ropheka Medical Center, Riverdale, GA; M. Shanik, Endocrine Associates of Long Island, PC, Smithtown, NY; C. Green, E. Blakney, The Green Clinic PC, Memphis, TN; K. Roberson, Delta Waves,

Inc., Colorado Springs, CO; E. Bretton, Albuquerque Clinical Trials, Albuquerque, NM; R. Pish, Pish Medical Associates, Uniontown, PA; K. Kaveh, Coastal Nephrology Associates Research Center, LLC, Port Charlotte, FL; B. Maynard, W. Barager, R. Soldyshev, Great Falls Clinic, LLP, Great Falls, MT; B. Austin, Preferred Primary Care Physicians, Inc, Pittsburgh, PA; P. Parmar, R. Simpson, The Lynn Institute, Denver, CO; A. Chauhan, Prime Medical Group, Clairton, PA; J. Kasper, R. Burr, Focus Clinical Research, Draper, UT; N. Patel, Wells Institute for Health Awareness, Kettering, OH; H. Mariano, Research Center of Fresno, Inc, Fresno, CA; T. Pluto, Fay West Family Practice, Scottdale, PA; C. Bratcher, Diabetes America at Plano, Plano, TX; M. Juarez, Panacea Clinical Research, San Antonio, TX; L. Levinson, Tipton Medical & Diagnostic Center, Tipton, PA; A. Awad, Clinical Research Consultants, LLC, Kansas City, MO; K. Longshaw, Leading Edge Research, PA, Dallas, TX; K. Hoffman, TRY Research, Maitland, FL; R. Richwine, Texas Health Physicians Group, Fort Worth, TX; D. Molter, North Myrtle Beach Family Practice, North Myrtle Beach, SC; J. Boscia, III, CU Pharmaceutical Research, Union, SC; S. Kowalyk, Endocrinology Associates, Greensburg, PA; P. Lemis, Jefferson Cardiology Association, Clairton, PA; J. Liss, Medical Research & Health Education Foundation Inc, Columbus, GA; R. Orr, Phoenix Medical Group, PC, Peoria, AZ; J. Riser, Riser Medical Research, Picayune, MS; J. Wood, Leading Edge Research, PA/INOVA, Richardson, TX; A. Ubani, Windsor Medical Clinic, Tampa, FL; W. Paine, F. Hassani, Mileground Family Practice, Morgantown, WV; F. Miranda, Dr. Francisco Miranda, Miami, FL; V. Hansen, Val R. Hansen, MD, Bountiful, UT; N. Farris, The Research Group of Lexington, LLC, Lexington, KY; R. Bowden, Charleston Internal Medicine Research Institute, Charleston, Charleston, WV; D. Ajani, Southwest Clinical Trial, Houston, TX; K. Maw, J. Andersen, Meridien Research, Brooksville, FL; B. Bergman, Benefis Health Group, Great Falls, MT; S. Dunmyer, Pharmacotherapy Research Associates, Inc, Zanesville, OH; D. Brandon, California Research Foundation, San Diego, CA; M. Anderson, Kernodle Clinic, Burlington, NC; P. Bononi, Partners in Nephrology & Endocrinology, Pittsburgh, PA; J. Prawer, Joel Prawer, MD, Saint Petersburg, FL; B. Seidman, Seidman Clinical Trials, Delray Beach, FL; H. Cruz, Florida Institute for Clinical Research, Orlando, FL; K. Wilks, Kerri Wilks, MD; Hallandale Beach, FL; L. DiSanto, Lisa DiSanto, DO, Saint Petersburg, FL; R. Buynak, Buynak Clinical Research, Valparaiso, IN; T. Christensen, Calabash Medical Center, Calabash, NC; P. Denker, Gulfcoast Endocrine and Diabetes Center, Clearwater, FL; W. Koppel, Walter Koppel, MD, Towson, MD; M. Stedman, Stedman Clinical Trials, Tampa, FL; L. Lewy-Alterbaum, All Medical Research LLC, Cooper City, FL; S. Karim, J. Shapiro, Philadelphia Health Associates, Philadelphia, PA; T. Gardner, T. Oskin, Northside Internal Medicine, Spokane, WA; N. Gabra, J. Malano, Burke Internal Medicine & Research, Burke, VA.