More integration to tackle health inequalities in European kidney care

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Press Release

Experts unite to call for improved access to renal replacement therapy in Europe at the EKHA spring forum 2014.

No other subject elicits greater emotion than inequalities in access to healthcare as these deficits affect not only life expectancy but also quality of life. Access to renal replacement therapy perfectly illustrates the disparity that exists for European citizens when it comes to accessing care. There are two types of treatment for advanced kidney disease: 1/ Dialysis and 2/ transplantation. Dialysis does not offer the same improvement in quality of life as that of a kidney transplant, but access to transplantation differs greatly between Member States, in part, due to different donor legislation. Unfortunately, access to renal replacement therapy also differs across borders mainly because of different health systems, and efforts to contain costs.

These inequalities in managing chronic kidney disease (CKD) are especially worrisome, given that today one in ten Europeans suffer from some degree of chronic kidney disease and experts predict an
increase of 17% over the next decade. Prevention and awareness of CKD are crucial to revert this trend, but more work must be done to provide universal access to high quality kidney care, respecting patients’ choice.

The European Kidney Health Alliance (EKHA) together with the MEP Group for Kidney Health - led by MEP Mrs Zofija Mazej-Kukovič - brought all key stakeholders together yesterday evening in the European Parliament in Brussels, including patients, experts and policy makers to discuss the issues surrounding the provision of kidney care. The aim of the EKHA spring forum was to unite all stakeholders involved to ensure a better understanding of the problem and to propose solutions.

Even if recognizing that the EU was supporting kidney health through research funding, experts agreed that there was a need for more EU integration in this field. Best practice guidelines and further integration of registry data seemed to many experts as the first steps towards stronger EU action.

This edition of the EKHA Spring Forum had a clear focus on the national perspective. After all, access to therapy remains a Member States’ competency. Therefore, the special guests of this edition were the representatives of Nephrology/Transplant/Dialysis Societies from Europe. The presentations were followed by a networking dinner at which experts from all over Europe shared their experiences and ideas on how to improve treatment of a disease affecting too many people to be ignored.

This event was made possible thanks to the support of the industry, namely Baxter, Alexion, B. Braun, Amgen and Fresenius.

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