

Why pharmacists are important in helping reduce and avoid AKI

All health and care workers need to know about AKI and how we can all impact incidence rates. But pharmacists have the potential to have the biggest impact as their reach and influence is wide. It ranges from sharing detailed knowledge, skill and experience with a wide range of professional colleagues, to one to one conversations with patients and their carers, all equally important.

Community pharmacists potentially have more contact with a patient than any other healthcare professional and as such are in a strong position to help patients who are most at risk of developing AKI; engaging with them, supporting and developing their understanding of risk, and monitoring medicines that can cause problems for kidneys.

Hospital pharmacists and pharmacy technicians working closely with the multidisciplinary team support prescribing decisions for patients with AKI or when the risk is recognised, as well as explaining to patients the effective use of their medicines.

Pharmacists working with CCGs and in GP surgeries can support these messages and ensure continuity of care.

AKI is a challenge for us all

Work with us to make sure you know all you need to know and we'll aim high to lower the incidence rate of AKI.



Think Kidneys

Think Kidneys is the NHS's programme for tackling acute kidney injury.

Our aims are to reduce avoidable harm and death for people with acute kidney injury, and to improve care for patients whether in hospital or at home.

During Autumn 2015 we will be working with CPPE (www.cppe.ac.uk) to develop pharmacists' understanding and knowledge of AKI through a campaign which will deliver a high impact AKI learning programme for every pharmacist and pharmacy technician in England.

We'll be encouraging you to take up the learning and apply the changes to your practice to improve patient care and reduce the harm done by avoidable incidences of AKI. Together, it's better.

Our website www.thinkkidneys.nhs.uk has lots of useful information and resources on it for pharmacists and this will expand over the coming months.

The Renal Pharmacy Group website can be accessed www.renalpharmacy.org.uk

'THINK KIDNEYS'

Pharmacists Thinking Kidneys



Working with pharmacists to raise awareness of acute kidney injury, helping to avoid it where possible and improve treatment and care

'THINK KIDNEYS'

NHS



Think Kidneys is a national programme led by NHS England in partnership with UK Renal Registry

Acute kidney injury (AKI) is common, serious and harmful.

We know quite a lot about AKI and the damage it does.....

- 🍷 **100,000 deaths** a year are associated with AKI
- 🍷 **at least a third** of those deaths could be avoided
- 🍷 **people do not know** that their kidneys have a role in processing medicines
- 🍷 **1 in 5 people** admitted to hospital as an emergency will have their illness complicated by AKI
- 🍷 **over 60% of AKI** starts in the community

We also know that some medicines may prevent the kidney from compensating when the patient is unwell. We know which patients are at risk. AKI is a growing global challenge and the NHS is the first healthcare system in the world to tackle it.

So wherever you practice as a pharmacist – in the community, hospital or general practice, you have an important role to play when it comes to acute kidney injury.

Pharmacists are critical as strong advocates and influencers for medicines optimisation in AKI: reducing risk and avoidable harm, advising about drug dosing in kidney impairment and identifying and monitoring drugs that can cause kidney damage.

Think Kidneys is the NHS campaign to improve the care of people at risk of, or with acute kidney injury.

Cause and risk of AKI

The most common risk factors for AKI for a patient include:

- 🍷 **pre-existing chronic kidney disease**
- 🍷 **age** – patients aged 75 years or over
- 🍷 **congestive cardiac failure**
- 🍷 **atherosclerotic peripheral vascular disease**
- 🍷 **Diabetes Mellitus**
- 🍷 **liver disease**

AKI may then be triggered by:

- 🍷 **sepsis or infections**
- 🍷 **hypovolaemia** – dehydration, bleeding
- 🍷 **hypotension** – for example after a serious heart attack
- 🍷 **certain medications or drugs** – this includes prescribed and over the counter medicines

For example some drugs may need to be suspended around the time of surgery or for certain radiological (contrast) procedures and the pharmacist in hospital, as part of the multiprofessional team, can advise the best course of action and make sure the patient is aware why this is happening.

In order to recognise AKI, an algorithm standardising the definition of AKI has now been agreed and issued under an NHS England NHS Patient Safety Alert. This is being integrated into biochemistry laboratory systems as a means of systematically identifying cases of AKI across the hospital. This provides the ability to ensure that a timely and consistent approach is taken across the NHS for the detection and diagnosis of AKI.

Do you know all you need to know?

Advising patients about the risks of AKI and talking to patients or their carers about the potential impact of certain drugs on their kidneys is not always easy.

While patients usually understand the reason why they have been prescribed certain drugs, they rarely know that those drugs can become harmful if they become unwell. Telling a patient they must stop and then restart taking the tablets they often believe are keeping them alive can be difficult and requires patience and empathy.

Community pharmacists have a role to play in helping patients avoid the use of over the counter NSAIDs during acute illness when the patient is known to be taking other medication.

How confident are you explaining the risk of AKI?

Do you know enough about AKI?

In fact, do you explain to patients about AKI?

Would you benefit from knowing more?

There's lots of advice and learning out there for pharmacists.....read on.....