TRANSPLANTATION

Reassuring news for kidney donors

Kidney donation poses no long-term health risk, an analysis of almost 4,000 donors reveals. “I’m hoping that this will alleviate the anxiety about living with one kidney,” says lead researcher Hassan Ibrahim.

As kidney donation from living donors increases, the long-term safety and well-being of these individuals is receiving growing attention. Previous analyses of kidney donor outcomes are compromised by short follow-up, limited numbers of participants and the use of estimated glomerular filtration rate (GFR) as an end point. These limitations prompted Ibrahim *et al.* to carry out a rigorous assessment of the issue.

The authors reviewed the 3,698 living-donor nephrectomies performed at the University of Minnesota, MN, between 1963 and 2007. They studied the payment records of the US Social Security Administration to ascertain whether donors (98% of whom were white) had died, and they contacted

surviving donors directly to determine their health status. Participants completed the SF-36 or SF-12 questionnaire to provide an indication of their quality of life.

Kidney donors had a similar lifespan and a lower incidence of end-stage renal disease than matched controls from the general population. In a subset of 255 randomly selected donors who underwent

measurement of GFR by iothexol clearance after a mean follow-up of 12.2 years, GFRs exceeded 60 ml/min/1.73 m² in 85.5% of cases. The prevalences of hypertension and albuminuria were similar to those in controls, and quality of life was significantly better than that of the general population.

The authors of an accompanying editorial in the *New England Journal of Medicine* comment that the favorable outcomes reported by Ibrahim and colleagues are cause for “cautious optimism”, and suggest that strict health requirements for kidney donors could explain these findings. Ibrahim reports that the authors have now extended their investigations in an ongoing study that encompasses two additional transplantation centers and an increased proportion of non-white donors.

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Original article Ibrahim, H. N. *et al.* Long-term consequences of kidney donation. *N. Engl. J. Med.* **360**, 459–469 (2009).