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Singapore studies precision diet for chronic kidney disease patients

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**Patients with chronic kidney disease are more likely to take an active role in managing their health if they have specific information about what to eat, good communication with their doctor, and strong family support, researchers from Singaporeâ??s Duke-NUS Medical School and SingHealth Polyclinics report in the journal BMJ Open. **



A Singapore study finds patients with chronic kidney disease need tailored nutrition guidance, as well as better communication with doctors and family support, to empower them to manage their condition.

Patients with chronic kidney disease are more likely to take an active role in managing their health if they have specific information about what to eat, good communication with their doctor, and strong family support, researchers from Singaporeâ??s Duke-NUS Medical School and SingHealth Polyclinics report in the journal *BMJ Open*.

Chronic kidney disease, which is the gradual loss of kidney function, is often linked with diabetes, and is one of the most rapidly rising causes of death worldwide. Most patients do not have symptoms until the disease is very advanced. Managing the condition through diet, exercise, taking medications and not smoking can prevent progression to end-stage kidney disease, which requires dialysis or a transplant.

“Self-management is key to managing chronic kidney disease,” said Professor Tazeen Jafar, from Duke-NUS’ Health Services and Systems Research Programme, the principal investigator and a senior co-author of the study, who is a kidney specialist. “However, the barriers and facilitators to self-management early on in the disease have not been well studied. Identifying ways to empower patients can help improve health outcomes and reduce the need for expensive treatment.”

Prof Jafar and colleagues, including Duke-NUS medical student Sun Joon Hwang, interviewed 20 patients with diabetes and chronic kidney disease from three SingHealth polyclinics, who had not yet moved into dialysis, to get a better sense of their perceptions of their condition. In Singapore, one in four adults suffers from chronic kidney disease. Despite this prevalence, the researchers found many patients lacked knowledge about the disease.

Patients suggested that a health coach providing tailored guidance on lifestyle, especially diet, will be helpful. Additionally, patients must take a more active role in their care when they had a good, trusting relationship with their doctor. The final major factor is family support.

Prof Jafar noted that the initial findings from this study showed how clearer information about diet and disease management, improved communication with doctors, and optimised family support can help increase the number of patients taking a more active role in their health.