

“The Benefits and Burdens of Kidney Transplantation for Indigenous Australians.”

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Abstract

Introduction

End-stage kidney disease (ESKD) disproportionately affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In the non-Indigenous community, kidney transplantation provides the best outcomes, particularly for young people with ESKD. The patient journey to transplantation is complex with multiple steps, each of which can be a potential barrier to success. For many Indigenous Australians, factors such as geographical remoteness, language and socioeconomic hardship magnify these barriers. Indigenous Australians are less likely to receive a kidney transplant and those that do experience significantly worse outcomes with higher rates of infection, acute rejection, hospitalization, graft loss and death. Research shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain intensely interested in transplantation and consider this to be the form of treatment most likely to allow them to return home and resume a ‘normal’ family life. Yet, people do not feel adequately supported by the health system to either pursue and receive a transplant, or to maintain rigorous post-transplant care.

Methods

As part of a combined research collaboration; aKction [Aboriginal Kidney Care Together – Improving Outcomes Now], community consultation workshops with Aboriginal people living with kidney disease, their families and careers, were conducted throughout metropolitan and regional centres in SA. Community members were invited through existing health networks and word of mouth and all those affected either directly or indirectly by kidney disease were welcome to attend.

Results

The key themes that came from these workshops reinforced the message that kidney transplantation is an area where more knowledge and education is required and attention needs to be focused.

Conclusion

Improving access to and outcomes of kidney transplantation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be a priority for the local health service and national kidney community. Ongoing collaborative research efforts underpinned by community consultation and support will drive change toward better outcomes for those living with kidney disease and their communities.