

# Kidney Konnections

A publication of the



Bay Area Association of  
**Kidney Patients**  
Affiliated with the National Kidney Foundation

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Welcome to this edition of the newsletter for the Bay Area Association of Kidney Patients!

The Bay Area Association of Kidney Patients is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization formed to educate and support Bay Area kidney patients. The BAAKP is affiliated with the San Francisco Chapter of the National Kidney Foundation

For questions or comments about this newsletter: [bay.area.kidney@gmail.com](mailto:bay.area.kidney@gmail.com)

Or by mail to  
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## Dr. Cho Addresses Skin Problems in Kidney Patients

By Jeanne Heise

Kidney patients, including those with chronic kidney disease or those who are on dialysis or have received a transplant, are at higher risk of developing skin problems. The BAAKP was fortunate to have Dr. Bryan Cho of the Camino Medical Group present an informative talk on skin cancer and other skin problems at our October meeting.

Dr. Cho's presentation initially focused on the increased incidence of skin cancers among transplant patients. His talk included advice on detection, prevention, and treatment of skin cancers as they occur. In general, transplant patients are at 100x greater risk of developing skin cancer than the general population. The most common type of skin cancer among transplant patients is squamous cell carcinoma (65x higher risk), but patients are also at risk to develop basal cell carcinoma (10x higher risk), Kaposi sarcoma (84x higher risk), and the more deadly melanoma (3.4x higher risk).

Patients at the highest risk of developing skin cancer are those who have a prior history of skin cancer; those who are fair skinned; those

with significant prior sun exposure; and those whose duration, intensity and type of immunosuppressant drugs make them more vulnerable. The risk for an individual increases each year after transplant, with a rate of 6% among patients after 5 years, increasing to 10% after 10 years.



**Dr. Bryan Cho**

The good news is that precautions can be taken, early detection is possible, and most skin cancers can be cured. Everyone should avoid significant amounts of direct sun, wear a hat and other cover ups for protection, and always wear a sunblock of at least SPF 30 and use lip balm with sunblock. Sunblock should be applied to all exposed areas 30 minutes prior to sun exposure. Do not skimp on amounts. Individuals should also avoid sun exposure between 10

am and 3 pm, seek shade if possible, and take precautions even on cloudy days.

Dr. Cho recommended anyone preparing for a transplant should have a pre transplant dermatological examination. Following transplant, patients should see their dermatologist at least once a year for a complete full body scan (more often if there is prior history of skin cancer). Individuals should also perform monthly self examinations, paying particular attention to freckles, moles, crusted lesions, and sores that don't heal. Anything suspicious should be brought to the attention of a dermatologist immediately.

Treatment for skin cancers vary according to the type of cancer, the cancers location, and whether additional structures besides the skin is involved (nerve, muscle). Treatment choices include medicinal creams, as well as several surgical options which include: removal using liquid nitrogen (cryotherapy), curettage surgical excision, or Mohs surgery. In some instances, altering immunosuppressant drug regimes may be warranted but are always done in conjunction with the transplant team.

Fortunately good resources are available in our community to help patients get informed about their risks

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and treatments. There is a high risk clinic at UCSF dealing specifically in skin cancer among transplant patients, as well as the dermatology group at Camino Medical Center (which includes Dr. Cho) that is well versed in treating transplant patients. A website about skin cancer in transplant patients written by Dr. Cho is available at

<http://www.dermatology.ucsf.edu/skincancer/transplant/>

Dr. Cho also covered two other dermatological topics of interest to kidney disease patients: itchy skin and shingles. Almost all kidney disease patients suffer from dry skin, and many experience excessive itchy skin as a result. Uremic itch, itching due to the build up of toxins within the body, is particularly common among dialysis patients (59%).

Treatments for dry skin and itching include topical therapies, oral drugs, homeopathic remedies, and UV treatment. Moisturizing is key. Moisturizers run the gambit from ointments to creams to lotions. Typically lotions only provide temporary relief and are not recommended. Dr. Cho recommended Aquaphor as an effective ointment and Eucerin as an effective cream (both are available over the counter). Patients should remember that hot showers exacerbate itching; showers should be lukewarm, less than 15 minutes in duration, and patients should avoid soap (Dove and Cetaphil are recommended). Patients should also remember to apply moisturizers to slightly damp skin to achieve the best effect.

Products like Sarna, a topical treatment, can provide short term relief from itching. Anesthetic creams and antihistamines are also effective in itch control, but some may require prescriptions. Capcecin, a homeopathic remedy derived from peppers, is also an effective anti-itch remedy. Hydrocortisone or other anti-inflammatory creams may be less effective as the itch is often not related to inflammation. Dialysis patients should always let their dialysis doctor know about

problem itching as dialysis therapies can sometimes be adjusted to improve the problem. Other promising anti-itch treatments include UV light therapy and a new oral medication called Gabepentin.

Shingles, a rash caused by the Herpes Zoster virus, is very common among transplant patients. Symptoms include blisters, pain, itching, and burning. A shingles vaccine is available for patients over 60 years of age. This vaccine is not recommended for transplant patients as it is a live vaccine. Anyone, regardless of age, should consider the vaccine if they are preparing for a transplant.

In summary, skin cancers and other skin problems are common among transplant patients and chronic kidney disease sufferers. Problems range from skin cancers to itching to shingles. Most kidney patients should include a dermatologist among their team of doctors, and should consult that dermatologist as soon as issues arise. Early detection and prompt treatment are critical in keeping these skin problems under control.

**Additional Information:**

High Risk Skin Cancer Clinic at UCSF: 415.353.7878  
Camino Medical Group: 650.934.7676

<http://www.at-risc.org/>

<http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com/special/sunscreens2008/findyoursunscreen.php?nothanks=1>



**Other Local Kidney Support Groups & Meetings**

This newsletter is not intended to be a substitute for advice from your medical professionals. Please consult your physician or other medical professionals about any changes or additions you make to your kidney care.

**T.R.I.O  
Transplant Recipients International Organization**

Silicon Valley Chapter  
Meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:30 pm. El Camino Hospital, Cafeteria Meeting Room, 2500 Grant Road Mountain View, CA 94040

[www.bayareatrio.org](http://www.bayareatrio.org)

408-353-2169

**Contra Costa Dialysis Support Group  
"Patients Helping Patients"**

4th Tuesday of each month  
January - October  
Carl's Junior Restaurant  
2280 Oak Grove Rd  
Walnut Creek, CA

**Contact:** Tom and Kathie McClish  
(916) 332-1086 OR Paul and Marie White (925) 934-4883

**For:** Dialysis patients and their loved ones, staff members

**The National Kidney Foundation**

(NKF) of Northern California has many resources available and sponsors many events.

For more info:

[www.kidneyca.org](http://www.kidneyca.org)

415-543-3303

**National Kidney Foundation**

[www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org)

## Ready, Set, Roll... BAAKP Members Record Our Meetings

The Bay Area Association of Kidney Patients is most fortunate to have the video expertise of Patrick and Tomomi Barron, current members and co-founders of our group. Patrick and Tomomi will video our meetings with their sophisticated equipment, edit the videos, post them to the web, and also make DVD's available to our membership!

At this time, there are several ways to access the videos that have been completed:

- Copy the URL below into your browser
- Go to 'Google Video' and type **BAAKP**



*Patrick Barron, Tomomi Barron and Jeanne Heise*

Videos currently in our library include:

**BAAKP Presents: Part 1 "Skin Cancer and Other Topics for Transplant Recipients"** Dr. Bryan Cho, Camino Medical Group, discusses common kidney patient complaints such as dry itchy skin and transplant-related skin cancers. <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-4560418008817299813&hl=en>

**BAAKP Presents: Part 2 "Skin Cancer and Other Topics for Transplant Recipients"** Part 2 of Dr. Bryan Cho's talk on dermatological problems in kidney disease. <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=7304262592438101238&hl=en>

**BAAKP Presents: Shar Carlyle's Success Story With MatchingDonors.com** How Kidney transplant recipient Shar Carlyle, a Polycystic Kidney Disease patient, found a kidney donor. <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=1887381626487161301&hl=en>

**BAAKP Presents: Financial and Insurance Solutions for Kidney Patients** Session 1: Choosing the right health insurance; Session 2: Understanding Medicare coverage (California HICAP); Session 3: A hospital perspective in getting help with financial clearance for your transplant. <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-548194354228528918&hl=en>

**BAAKP Presents: Paired Kidney Donor Exchange Brings New Hope to Kidney Patients** Dr. Steve Katznelson, California Pacific Medical Center discusses the recent advancement of paired donor exchanges making it possible for ABO incompatible donor/recipients to pair with other ABO incompatible couples <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=7639255336280256755&hl=en>

**BAAKP Presents: Kidney Transplantation Professionals on Common Patient Concerns** Three experienced professionals from California Pacific Medical (CPMC) in San Francisco field questions from kidney patients. <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=1483537681075357650&hl=en>

## Innovative Options in Living Donor Transplants

*by Shar Carlyle, West Coast Regional Coordinator, MatchingDonors.com*

If you've been successful in receiving a solid organ transplant, I offer my heartiest congratulations. However, the call, "We have a kidney for you" may never come for over 100,000 patients waiting on the UNOS list (Source: UNOS Web site, 11/9/08). Perhaps you know someone who became so physically compromised while on dialysis that they were no longer eligible for transplant surgery. But, innovations in transplantation, including paired donation and directed altruistic living donation are gaining in acceptance nationwide. Directed altruistic living donation is when an individual donates one of their organs to a person of their own choosing whom they may or may not have known previously.

In March of 2005, I received a kidney from Sally Kennerson, an altruistic living donor. I made a vow that if I made it to transplant, I would create a better future for other kidney patients by advocating for, and embracing innovations that increase options for renal patients. That is why I serve as West Coast Regional Coordinator for MatchingDonors.com. So if you, or someone you love, want more information, I will be happy to consult with you: [shar7@mac.com](mailto:shar7@mac.com) or 415-457-2211. For a 5% membership discount, enter coupon code 302527 when you join.

***Educating and  
Supporting Bay Area  
Kidney Patients***

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*Newsletter publication dates are November, February, May and August  
If you've received an extra copy of this newsletter, please pass it along!*

## January 11, 2009 Meeting Features Marc Melcher, M.D., Ph.D. & Members of the Stanford Kidney Transplant Program

### **SAVE THESE DATES!**

#### **General Meetings:**

- **January 11, 2009**  
**Marc Melcher, MD, PhD,  
& Stanford Kidney Trans-  
plant Program Members**
- **March 29, 2009**  
**Topic to be announced**
- **June 7, 2009**  
**Topic to be announced**

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#### **Steering Committee Meetings**

**Second Wednesday of  
every month at 6:30 pm**

*If you would like to join us in the  
leadership of this group, we would  
love to have your help.*

*(Call for location)*

**[bay.area.kidney@gmail.com](mailto:bay.area.kidney@gmail.com)  
650-326-2107**

The Bay Area Association of Kidney Patients welcomes Dr. Marc Melcher and members of the Stanford Kidney/Kidney-Pancreas Transplant Program to the January 11, 2009 meeting. Dr. Melcher is a transplant surgeon in the Department of Transplantation at the Stanford University Medical Center.



Dr. Melcher will discuss Stanford's paired donation program, along with the bariatric surgery program for obese transplant candidates. He will be joined by members of the Kidney Transplant team and they will discuss transplant qualifications, extended donor criteria, the pre-transplant period, the transplant surgery itself and

post transplant management. Bring your questions about kidney transplants; this is the perfect opportunity to get them answered!

The meeting will take place from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 11, 2009 at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation, located at 795 El Camino Real, Palo Alto, CA 94301. The event is free. Kidney-friendly re-

freshments will be served. The meeting also features time for social interaction and patient support.

**To reserve your seat, email us at [bay.area.kidney@gmail.com](mailto:bay.area.kidney@gmail.com) or call us at 650-326-2107. You may also fax your reservation to 650-327-0178, or mail to BAAKP, Box 2332, Menlo Park, CA 94026-2332.**