Summer Meeting Featured the Relationship of Calcium & Phosphorous Levels in CKD

By Anne Griffin

The Bay Area Association of Kidney Patients was pleased to have Dr. Luis Alvarez, M.D., PhD, Nephrologist with the Palo Alto Medical Foundation as our June 7, 2009 meeting featured speaker. Dr. Alvarez explained the roles of calcium, phosphate, Vitamin D, and the parathyroid hormone and the resulting effects on kidney patients in the development of cardiovascular and bone diseases.

Dr. Alvarez first looked back at the research in phosphate management over the last 90 years. He explored the underlying science behind phosphate and calcium control and discussed how compromised kidneys fail to filter phosphate out of the bloodstream. The parathyroid gland, phosphorus, calcium, and activated vitamin D are all intertwined in a complicated dance to retain calcium in your bones and excrete excess phosphorus.

In the past, physicians noted that many of their CKD patients had calcium deposits in various parts of the body, leading to possible heart disease and bone decalcification. One of the major causes of death in kidney patients is cardiovascular disease, with calcification of the blood vessels as the underlying contributor. The lower the kidney function, the higher the risk of cardiovascular disease.

The controlling gland for the exchange of calcium and phosphorus is the parathyroid gland, located near the thyroid in the neck. Higher levels of PTH hormone alert nephrologists to possible problems. Vitamin D is activated by healthy kidneys, but this activation drops off when kidneys are functioning at less than 60%.

In addition to high phosphorus, low Vitamin D levels can also increase the secretion of parathyroid hormone, with the result that calcium is pulled from the bones. This results in bone disease and possible osteoporosis. Many CKD patients take a prescribed form of activated Vitamin D daily.

It is especially difficult to remove phosphorus by dialysis. In the past, nephrologists tested various remedies to control phosphate absorption from food. One remedy was aluminum, which proved to have harmful long term effects. After 10 years of research, it was discovered that oral Calcium Carbonate successfully lowered blood phosphate levels to acceptable levels of less than 5.5 mg/dl (milligram per deciliter). Normal ranges are 2.5 to 4.9 mg/dl. When phosphorous levels are less than 5.5 mg/dl, the risks of bone decalcification, calcification of the coronary blood vessels and other parts of the body, as well as bone pain and itching, are reduced. Today, there are many more "phosphate binders" available and your nephrologist will select the correct medication for you.

Dr. Alvarez also stressed that in addition to any medication, a low protein / low phosphorus diet also plays an important role in controlling phosphorus.

Thank you Dr. Alvarez for such an informative and enthusiastic presentation!
We Love Our Sponsors!

Special thanks go to Jeremy Pullman of Genzyme Therapeutics, manufacturers of Renagel and Renvela (phosphate binders) and of Hectoral (activated Vitamin D) for partially sponsoring this event. Jeremy reviewed Genzyme's pertinent products and provided free informational literature, including dietary specifics about phosphate control. This literature will also appear on our Library Table at upcoming events!

In addition, Genzyme has provided a $1,000 grant to support our upcoming Fall 2009 through Summer 2010 Bay Area Association of Kidney Patients' meetings. Thank you Genzyme for all of your support!

The Importance of a Low Protein and Low Phosphorous Diet

Dietitian C. Amy Shiau, M.S., M.B.A., R.D. of Satellite Dialysis, Cupertino addressed practical aspects of controlling phosphorus in our everyday diet. The goal is to help end stage renal disease patients reduce phosphorus in the foods they eat from being absorbed into their bloodstream. A low protein and low phosphate diet is necessary to keep phosphorus levels in check and for phosphate binders to work well. This starts with in the grocery store with reading the labels for hidden phosphorus sources. It is important to limit the consumption of protein to .6 to .75 grams/km weight for GFR < 25 and .12 grams/km for dialysis patients.

Remember, good health is going to require lifestyle modification and breaking some old habits including restricting your salt intake!

According to the Food and Nutrition Board, over the past 20 years phosphorus intake by Americans has increased 10-15%. Part of this increase is attributable to phosphate additives in processed food in all segments of the food pyramid because it is an inexpensive and effective way to tenderize meat and increase flavor.

You can spot hidden phosphorus by checking for variations of the word phosphate, such as phosphoric acid, sodium aluminum phosphate, pyrophosphate, polyphosphates and calcium phosphate.

Take a moment to check the ingredient list for foods that you recognize as being high in phosphorus such as baking powder, cheese products or nonfat dry milk.

Other Local Kidney Support Groups & Meetings

PKD Support Group
South Bay Support Group
Leader: Clarisa Marcus
Phone: (408) 334-9583
Email clarisanim@gmail.com
Meets 3rd Saturday of each month from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. in San Jose

East Bay Support Group
Leader: Donald Kagan
Phone: (925) 354-1548
donald@talentedtechs.com

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
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 of No. California & No. Nevada
Has many resources available and sponsors many events.
For more info: www.kidneync.org
415-543-3303

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Members of the Bay Area Association of Kidney Patients and their supporters journeyed to downtown San Jose on Saturday June 6th to participate in the 3rd Annual NKF Kidney 5K Walk. The event was held at City View Plaza and attracted over 3,000 walkers, family members, and friends.

The BAAKP team had 38 registered walkers with 14 walkers raising a total of $13,580! The donations will be used to fund activities and events to educate and support Bay Area Kidney Patients and their families. This is quite an achievement considering the current state of the economy. Many of our BAAKP meeting attendees contributed as well; we’d like to thank you individually and as a group. This support indicates to your Steering Committee and the BAAKP walk team that you approve of our activities and want us to continue.

Walkers followed a course through downtown San Jose which started and ended at City View Plaza. Kidney donors and recipients were asked to wear a special orange scarf so they could easily be identified. Many inspirational stories were exchanged throughout the day.

Local merchants donated refreshments and door prizes, the Road Dogs entertained the crowd with live rock music, and the “Kids Zone” provided various activities for the children. A great time was had by all. We look forward to seeing you there next year!

Anne Griffin and Melissa Boccia explaining the Buffet of Choices to a NKF walker

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Susan Basler being massaged after the walk by Colleen Reilly, Personal Trainer

Walt & Linda Umbach
October 11, 2009 Meeting to Spotlight “Dialysis Options”

At our October meeting, we will explore the current modes of dialysis available to kidney patients today. Our featured speaker will be John Moran, MB, BS, FRACP, MACP, FASN, Senior Vice President, Clinical Affairs of Satellite Dialysis and Corporate Medical Director for Wellbound, a subsidiary of Satellite, who will discuss current research on the various dialysis treatment options.

Also present will be team members (nurses and social workers) of Wellbound and Satellite, explaining the different types of treatment and demonstrating the equipment. In addition to in-center hemodialysis, they will be discussing at-home peritoneal dialysis and the new home hemodialysis modality. There will also be a panel of patients describing their own experiences with dialysis. There will be ample opportunities for questions.

If you are a kidney patient possibly facing dialysis, currently a dialysis patient, or a friend or family member of a dialysis patient, this is a unique opportunity for you to learn and compare the various options available to kidney patients in the 21st Century.

The meeting will take place at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation, 795 El Camino Real, 3rd floor, Palo Alto, CA 94301 on Sunday October 11, 2009 from 1 PM to 4 PM. To reserve your seat, please email us at bay.area.kidney@gmail.com or call us at 650-323-2225. You may also fax your reservation to 650-327-0178 or mail to BAAKP, Box 2332, Menlo Park, CA 94026.