

## Nutritional aspects in hemodialysis

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**Nutritional aspects in hemodialysis.** The results of cross sectional studies throughout the world indicate that maintenance hemodialysis patients are at risk of malnutrition. Longitudinal studies show that malnutrition is associated with a reduced life expectancy mainly because of cardiovascular and infectious complications. Several factors are responsible for malnutrition of hemodialysis patients. Protein-energy intake is often reduced because of inappropriate dietary restrictions, anorexia, and taste alterations, promoting malnutrition in most patients entering dialysis. Intercurrent illnesses and frequent hospitalizations add to meal disturbances. A state of persistent catabolism may result from acidosis, resistance to anabolic factors such as growth hormone, insulin, and insulin-like growth factor-1, as well as a chronic inflammatory state caused by dialysis membrane and fluid bioincompatibility. In addition, losses of nutrients, including glucose, amino acids, proteins, and vitamins, occur during the dialysis treatment. Careful monitoring of dietary intakes is mandatory even in predialysis patients. In hemodialysis patients, the dose of dialysis should be adapted to correct acidosis and to relieve anorexia caused by accumulation of uremic toxins and hyperleptinemia. When malnutrition is established, active therapeutic interventions should take place, including intradialytic parenteral nutrition if oral supplementation has failed to improve nutritional status. Anabolism has been observed during the administration of recombinant growth hormone and insulin-like growth factor-1. Emerging therapeutic strategies against malnutrition may also involve a short period of daily dialysis.

End-stage renal disease (ESRD) patients treated by maintenance hemodialysis (MHD) are at risk of malnutrition, as shown by several cross sectional studies in the United States, Japan, and Europe. In fact, virtually every study examining the nutritional status of hemodialysis patients indicates that such patients frequently manifest protein calorie malnutrition [1]. The clinical evidence for malnutrition includes decreased relative body weight, skinfold thickness, arm muscle circumference, and low growth rates in children (Table 1). Body composition measurements using total body nitrogen, bioelectrical impedance measurements, and dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) also reveal a high incidence of protein calorie malnutrition. Serum levels of albumin and prealbumin

are strongly correlated with body composition and dialysis outcomes and represent suitable surrogates to follow-up closely the nutritional status of the patients [2]. According to threshold values of 35 g/L for albumin and 300 mg/L for prealbumin, recent data from France on more than 7000 hemodialyzed patients indicated that 20 or 36%, respectively, of them suffered from malnutrition despite satisfying dialysis adequacy (mean Kt/V  $1.36 \pm 0.36$ ). In this study, the mean normalized protein nitrogen appearance (nPNA) was  $1.13 \pm 0.32$  g/kg/day; however, 35% of patients had a nPNA below 1 g/kg/day [3].

### CONSEQUENCES OF MALNUTRITION ON DIALYSIS OUTCOMES

While reported annual mortality rates range from 23.6% in the United States in 1993 [4], to 10.7% in Europe [5], and to 9.5% in Japan in 1994 [6], a common factor of increased death risk in these populations is malnutrition [7]. Serum albumin below 35 g/L [2, 8–10] and serum prealbumin below 300 mg/L (abstract; Chiappini et al, *Nephrol Dial Transplant* 5:699, 1990) [2, 11–13] have been shown to be independent predictors of increased morbidity and mortality.

An early report from 98 nondiabetic hemodialysis patients followed for 12 months showed an inverse relationship between the protein nitrogen appearance and the frequency of hospitalizations and mortality rate [14]. In 1990, Lowrie and Lew showed that in over 12,000 MHD patients followed for 12 months, of various predialysis serum chemistries, the serum albumin exhibited the most striking odds ratio for survival [15]. The multicenter Canadian Hemodialysis Morbidity Study reported a direct correlation between the serum albumin level and the morbidity and mortality risk in 486 hemodialysis patients [16]. Two other recent studies also confirm that a low serum albumin concentration is a strong predictor of high death rates [17, 18].

A follow-up from the large French multicenter study on a representative subset of more than 1600 patients reported a survival of 90 and 78% at one and two years,

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**Table 1.** Nutritional parameters in chronic hemodialysis patients

Clinical	Biological
Body weight	Serum urea/creatinine
Skinfold thickness	nPNA
Arm muscle circumference	Serum albumin
Subjective Global Assessment	Serum prealbumin
Growth rate (children)	Transferrin
Cholesterol	
IGF-1	
Total body nitrogen	
Bioelectrical impedance	
Dual energy x-ray absorptiometry	

respectively, and confirmed a significant influence of serum levels of albumin and prealbumin on survival (abstract; Combe et al, *J Am Soc Nephrol* 10:239A, 1999) [3].

It should be emphasized that these findings do not indicate that improving nutritional status by increasing nutritional intake or other maneuvers will reduce morbidity or mortality. Malnutrition by itself is rarely reported as a cause of death in ESRD patients. In fact, malnutrition itself may be detrimental on outcomes of infectious and cardiovascular complications. It is also possible that the same illnesses that engender malnutrition will independently cause the high morbidity and mortality, therefore reducing the pathogenetic weight of malnutrition per se.

## FACTORS OF MALNUTRITION IN HEMODIALYSIS PATIENTS

A high prevalence of protein calorie malnutrition is observed in patients commencing hemodialysis (Table 2) [19]. Those hemodialysis patients who are malnourished at the onset of dialysis therapy are likely to stay malnourished one to two years later. Conversely, those individuals who are well nourished at the onset of maintenance dialysis therapy are likely to remain well nourished.

Malnutrition can result from several factors that can be found in different combinations in selected patients, and it involves reduced dietary intakes, metabolic disorders, and inadequate dialysis [20] in terms of dose [21, 22] or membrane biocompatibility [23, 24].

## DIETARY NUTRIENT INTAKE

There are many possible causes for protein calorie malnutrition in patients receiving maintenance dialysis therapy. These patients are chronically exposed to the risk of inadequate diet counseling or self-designed restrictions, and repeated hospitalizations (abstract; Young et al, *J Am Soc Nephrol* 10:259A, 1999) [25], which disturb dietary habits and reduce dietary nutrient intake, and superimposed acute or chronic illnesses [26]. We have observed in our unit that hemodialysis patients

**Table 2.** Factors of malnutrition in chronic hemodialysis patients

Previous malnutrition
Reduced protein-energy intakes
Inadequate diet counseling
Anorexia
Taste disturbances
Digestive side-effects of drugs
Frequent hospitalizations
Primary/intercurrent illnesses
Reduced dietary intakes
Catabolic state
Chronic inflammation
Endocrine and metabolic disorders
Acidosis
Anemia
Uremic toxins
Hyperparathyroidism
Hyperleptinemia
Growth hormone and IGF-1 resistance
Dialysis-related events
Inadequate Kt/V
Bioincompatible membranes
Chronic inflammation
Endotoxin back-filtration
Amino acid and protein losses
Vitamin losses

either referred for checkup or following surgery overall received only 80% of the scheduled meals, thus resulting in a weekly deficit of about 2800 kcal per patient. The reasons for those missed meals were, for example, fasting states before diagnosis procedures or surgery, modified schedule of dialysis sessions, postdialysis fatigue, and inadequacy between meals and patient's preferences. It is therefore not surprising that in the French cohort, malnutrition was observed significantly more often in patients with diabetic and vascular kidney disease, even after adjustment for age [3]. Before starting maintenance dialysis therapy, low-protein and low-phosphate diets are routinely prescribed. These diets may be sometimes hypocaloric [27, 28] and therefore may be deleterious to the patient's nutritional status, if not adequately monitored by skilled dietitians.

The most important cause of inadequate nutrient intake is almost certainly anorexia. Anorexia may be caused by many factors, including: uremic toxins; gastrointestinal disorders such as peptic ulcers, gastritis, or esophagitis; unpalatable medicines; and psychosocial disorders [20, 29, 30].

Recent evidence suggest that protein calorie malnutrition often begins incipiently when the glomerular filtration rate (GFR) is about 28 to 35 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup> or even higher (abstract; Kopple et al, *J Am Soc Nephrol* 5:335, 1994) and continues to fall gradually as the GFR decreases below these values [31, 32]. However, patients usually do not become frankly malnourished until the GFR is 4 to 5 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup> or lower. As a result, pre-ESRD patients often have critically low levels of protein and energy intakes, and the spontaneous nutrient intake

does not normalize when maintenance dialysis treatment is started. Jacob et al reported that 45% of 61 MHD patients had a protein intake less than 1.0 g/kg body weight/day [33], whereas Bergström et al found that 12% of 117 unselected hemodialysis patients had a protein intake below 0.8 g/kg body weight/day [30]. A recent report of the HEMO pilot study in hemodialysis patients entering dialysis showed a low energy intake (22.8 kcal/kg body weight/day) and a protein intake of 0.94 g/kg body weight/day, much less than the 35 kcal/kg body weight/day usually recommended for hemodialysis patients or normal individuals [34, 35]. These protein energy intakes may strongly affect early outcomes of renal replacement therapy and explain why long-term hemodialysis patients are frequently malnourished.

A progressive decrease in protein calorie intake may also depend on taste disturbances. The neuroregulation of appetite is far from well understood in patients with chronic renal failure [36]. Zinc deficiency contributes to taste disturbances [37, 38]. It has also been suggested that, in addition to factors such as delayed gastric emptying, poorly palatable diets enhanced by salt and electrolyte restrictions, and postdialysis malaise, some uremic toxins appear to affect appetite directly. Anderstam et al recently infused uremic ultrafiltrate into the peritoneal cavity of rats. Compared with rats infused with saline or plasma ultrafiltrate from healthy humans, the rats infused with uremic ultrafiltrate demonstrated a net reduction in their spontaneous food intake [39]. Ultrafiltrate fractionation studies suggest that the molecular weight of compounds that may induce anorexia is between 1000 and 5000 D [39]. Another compound called leptin, a 15 kD polypeptidic hormone synthesized by adipocytes, has been shown to decrease appetite in rats and to induce weight loss when administered as a recombinant product in obese humans [40]. Leptin is abnormally high in hemodialysis patients as a consequence of reduced renal clearance, elevated insulin levels, and possibly chronic inflammation [41–44].

These observations suggest that more intensive dialysis therapy might increase appetite by removing uremic toxins. Lindsay and Spanner increased the dose of dialysis in a group of hemodialysis patients and observed a spontaneous increase in proteic catabolic rate without evidence of catabolic events, suggesting that patients had increased their protein intake [45]. On the other hand, in many patients, the proteic catabolic rate does not become normal when the Kt/V is increased. Although this might reflect the fact that Kt/V is not sufficiently high in these patients, it is possible that comorbid factors, poorly dialyzable compounds, or other factors may contribute to the anorexia and that a high dose of dialysis, within a range that is attainable routinely may improve but not eradicate anorexia in many patients.

Further studies are needed to evaluate the nutritional

benefits of maneuvers designed to enhance the removal of uremic toxins through increased dialysis elimination or adsorption. A specific goal should be to lower plasma leptin by increasing dialysis clearance or decreasing its overproduction, which is likely associated with chronic inflammation [44].

## NUTRITIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF CHRONIC INFLAMMATION

In patients with chronic renal failure (CRF), chronic inflammation may be associated with immunologically-mediated primary renal diseases, treated by corticosteroids, which in turn induces a well-known catabolic state.

However, an important factor is likely repeated inflammatory bursts caused by bioincompatibility of dialysis membranes and fluids. The quality of dialysis water and dialysis fluid backfiltration play a major role, as suggested by cross-sectional studies in which plasma C-reactive protein levels are significantly higher in patients treated by low-flux hemodiafiltration than in patients treated by either high-flux hemodiafiltration, paired filtration dialysis, or conventional hemodialysis [46]. C-reactive protein is an acute phase reactant protein synthesized by the liver in response to inflammatory processes leading to an increase in IL-6 production. As a result, synthesis of acute phase reactants by the liver is associated with a decreased albumin production [47]. Moreover, chronic inflammatory status likely increases lipid and protein oxidation, and probably contributes to vascular disease and tissue amyloid deposition [48, 49].

## DIALYSIS-RELATED NUTRIENT LOSSES

The hemodialysis procedure itself may promote wasting by removing nutrients and also by stimulating protein catabolism. Hemodialysis increases the urea nitrogen appearance (UNA or net urea generation), enhances net protein breakdown, and promotes negative nitrogen balance [50]. During sham hemodialysis in normal volunteers, Gutierrez et al reported an increased release of amino acids from the leg, indicating enhanced net muscle protein breakdown [51]. The bioincompatible nature of dialyzer membranes may stimulate the release of cytokines, such as interleukin-1, which may be the cause of the enhanced protein catabolism.

During a routine hemodialysis treatment using a low-flux cuprophane membrane, 4 to 9 g of free amino acids are lost through the dialyzer during fasting and 8 to 10 g if patients are eating during the procedure [52, 53]. Peptides are also removed in a range of 2 to 3 g per dialysis [53], thus leading to a net amino acid of 10 to 13 g per dialysis [30]. With high-flux dialyzers in fasting patients, about 8 g of free amino acids are removed during a routine hemodialysis treatment [54]. However, the use

of high-flux membranes with an increased permeability to protein may result in albumin losses as high as 25 g per session when highest ultrafiltration rates are used during hemodiafiltration (abstract; Hillion et al, *J Am Soc Nephrol* 10:283A, 1999).

Reuse of dialyzers is a routine procedure in the United States [55]. Although usually small amounts of protein are lost during a single hemodialysis, Kaplan et al reported markedly increased protein losses when polysulfone membranes were reprocessed many times with bleach or formaldehyde [56]. After 20 to 25 reuses, up to 17 g of protein were lost during one hemodialysis session. Protein losses do not seem to increase markedly until reprocessing exceed 10 times. Interestingly, when the use of bleach for dialyzer reprocessing was discontinued, the patients underwent a significant increase in serum albumin, from 3.6 to 3.8 g/dL, which was considered to be due to reduced protein leakage through the dialyzers [56].

During hemodialysis with glucose-free dialysate, an average of 20 to 30 g of glucose is lost into the dialysate [57, 58]. If a dialysate containing 200 mg/dL (11 mmol/L) of glucose monohydrate (180 mg/dL of anhydrous glucose) is used, there is a net absorption of 10 to 30 g of glucose during each dialysis [57, 58].

Deficiency of water-soluble vitamins in hemodialysis patients results primarily from insufficient intake, losses into dialysate, or altered vitamin synthesis or metabolism or possibly the presence of inhibitors to the actions of the vitamins. Water-soluble vitamins and other bioactive compounds are removed by both hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis [59–62]. These losses may be reduced by decreased urinary excretion and may be partially replaced by the vitamins provided in a normal diet [63–68]. If patients have low nutrient intakes, these losses may enhance malnutrition. In fact, the content of several vitamins in typical meals ingested by MHD patients is less than the Recommended Dietary Allowances of the Food and Nutrition Board. However, the need of water-soluble vitamins may vary with the new types of dialyzers used. The more porous, high-flux dialyzers remove greater quantities of vitamins. Some of the detrimental effects of losses of water soluble vitamins and other compounds might be alleviated by either intradialytic supplementation [69] or convective dialysis methods associated with reinfusion of regenerated ultrafiltrate.

### IMPAIRED UTILIZATION OF NUTRIENTS

Endocrine and metabolic disorders are frequently observed during chronic renal failure. There is a state of resistance to many anabolic hormones, including insulin, growth hormone, and insulin-like growth factor-1 (IGF-1) [70–72].

Acidemia, a condition frequently observed in renal

**Table 3.** Therapeutic nutritional interventions

Interventions
Adequate dialysis dose
Daily dialysis
Correction of acidosis
Oral/enteral dietary supplements
Parenteral nutrition
Intradialytic
Intradialytic rHu-EPO
rHu-GH
rHu-IGF

failure patients, increases protein catabolism [73, 74]. Metabolic acidosis impairs protein metabolism by mainly increasing protein catabolism through a stimulation of the ubiquitin-proteasome pathway. In addition, acidosis increases insulin resistance and impairs the effects of insulin on glucose and amino acid utilization. Acidosis is also partially corrected by a low-protein diet [75].

### PERSPECTIVES FOR NUTRITIONAL INTERVENTIONS

In face of numerous causes for malnutrition, it is not unexpected to find many different treatments for malnutrition. Some are still experimental, although pilot studies appear promising (Table 3).

A low serum bicarbonate level may be associated with higher protein intakes [3], and it is unclear from clinical studies whether those patients have a higher benefit of larger protein intakes as compared with the detrimental catabolism induced by acidosis per se. However, since dietary protein intake is not easy to assess routinely and because nPNA may not be a valid marker of protein intake in acidosis (for example, a nonstable metabolic state), acidosis control should be advised, through oral or dialytic route, to reach a minimum predialytic serum bicarbonate level of 22 mmol/L.

Oral and enteral dietary supports are generally not largely prescribed because of moderate taste acceptability, patients getting tired of them, and products overcost. In addition, a number of patients may present gastrointestinal discomfort or disease and may not benefit from these compounds. However, oral supplements may prevent the setting of malnutrition particularly due to low energy intakes and should therefore be proposed systematically before any intravenous nutrition therapy, because of almost no side effects and potential benefits. In particular states of severe malnutrition, we and others have observed unexpected recoveries after gastrostomy and sustained enteral nutrition.

Parenteral nutrition, either predialytic (IDPN) or continuous (TPN), has been proposed in response to the failure of increasing oral nutrients intake. Except during specific conditions such as surgery, trauma, severe sepsis,

or chronic digestive disease where this intravenous support will maintain an optimal intake, there are no convincing randomized controlled studies supporting the use of long-term intravenous nutrition [76]. Furthermore, side effects may occur such as nausea, malaise, liver test abnormalities, and sepsis, and in one study, IDPN has been associated with outcome worsening in patients with a serum albumin of greater than 35 g/L [77]. However, the fact that nutrients could be delivered without extra hospitalization and venous access during a regular dialysis, that new delivery systems and solutions (all-in-one) are proposed, and new formulas are under development still represent a large potential for future treatments, which should be adequately validated through clinical trials of best quality.

In order to stimulate protein synthesis, anabolic compounds have been administered during limited pilot trials in maintenance dialysis patients. It is now well accepted that recombinant growth hormone (rhGH) exerts a strong anabolic effect in chronic renal failure children, and benefits on growth and body composition have largely overcome limited side effects and high costs of treatment [78]. In chronic renal failure adults, rhGH has been associated with anabolic response during acute and chronic administration [79–81]. Since IGF-1 is the active compound released by growth hormone, rhIGF-1 has also been administered in adult chronic renal failure patients and showed anabolic properties as well [82]. Long-term administration of these compounds in adult MHD patients are still lacking, but it seems reasonable to try to boost the nutritional response by a short-term growth factor treatment combined with optimal protein and energy intakes.

Finally, recent data from short daily dialysis programs seem to offer a strong and rapid renutrition response by enlarging to almost unrestricted diets patients nutrient, salt, and beverage intakes. This last issue, debatable in terms of costs and patient comfort, deserves attention, at least as a rescue therapy (abstract; Traeger et al, *J Am Soc Nephrol* 10:197A, 1999).

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