Nephrology, dialysis and transplantation in Turkey*

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The Turkish Society of Nephrology was founded in 1970 by Dr Kemal Önen and others in Istanbul. This followed the establishment, in 1965, of a nephrology department in Istanbul Medical Faculty, contemporaneous with the introduction of haemodialysis treatment. It took 10 years until the first successful renal transplantation in Turkey was performed at the Hacettepe University Hospital in Ankara in 1975. It was a living related donor transplantation under the direction of Dr Mehmet Haberal.

Turkey has 60 million inhabitants. There are currently 220 haemodialysis centres nationwide and 22 transplantation centres. In 1997, according to the TND (Türk Nefroloji Derneği) Registry there were 10000 uraemic patients who were treated by maintenance haemodialysis and 1893 treated by PD, 13 of whom were pediatric cases (below age 15). Among incident cases, the underlying diseases were diabetic nephropathy in 4.5%, polycystic kidney disease 2.5%, analgesic nephropathy less than 0.5%. Amongst pediatric cases, the ranking order was urinary tract infection, glomerulonephritis and others. The rate of admission of new patients (incidence) was 178 per million population per year (pmp): 2024 patients were alive with a functioning transplant. The rate of transplantation, as of 1997, is currently 360 per year. 85% of transplants were from living and only 15% from cadaveric donors. The TND Registry currently has a 75% response rate.

The Turkish Nephrological Society has currently 200 members, 100 of whom are nephrologists. This corresponds to 1.7 nephrologists pmp, compared to 5 pmp in the UK, 30 pmp in Germany and 60 pmp in Italy. In Turkey, many dialysis units are taken care of by general internists. Specialization as a nephrologist is dependent upon qualification including clinical work and a notoriously difficult exam.

The Turkish Nephrological Society has strong ties with European nephrology. In 1978, Turkey hosted the EDTA Congress in Istanbul. The intense
participation of Turkish nephrologists in the scientific life of the European Renal Association is reflected by a few landmarks: Turkish authors were in position seven amongst submissions to NDT, Turkish authors were in position two amongst the countries submitting abstracts to the annual meeting of the ERA-EDTA in Rimini in 1998. Turkey is also cooperating with the registry of the ERA-EDTA. Turkey is proud to be an active member of the European Nephrological Community (and is relieved to see that nephrologists are wiser than politicians and admit Turkey into their community).