

# The Turkish Society of Nephrology from 1970 to 2020: A 50-Year History

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1

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## INTRODUCTION

Turkish Society of Nephrology (TSN) celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020. Since its establishment, the TSN intended to operate by following its core purposes which are raising the level of education, scientific studies, and research, preventive and therapeutic health services in the fields of nephrology, hypertension, dialysis, and transplantation throughout Turkey, developing professional, scientific and social relations among its members, protecting the rights of its field and its members and carrying out studies to ensure the best representation of Turkish nephrology at the national and international levels. In this article, the readers will find a summary of the 50-year success story of TSN.

## Establishment

The TSN was founded on March 3, 1970, at Istanbul University Haseki Hospital Pharmacology and Treatment Clinic by Ord. Prof. Ekrem Şerif Egeli, Ord. Prof. Sedat Tavat, Prof. Reşat Garan, Prof. Kemal Önen, Prof. Osman Barlas, Prof. Ferhan Berker, Prof. Gıyas Korkut, and Assoc. Prof. Necdet Koçak. At the inaugural meeting of the founding members, Ord. Prof. Ekrem Şerif Egeli was elected president of the association, Prof. Kemal Önen, as the secretary-general and Prof. Osman Barlas, Prof. Reşat Garan and Prof. Ferhan Berker as board members. Ord. Prof. Ekrem Şerif Egeli held the position of president until 1978, at which point Prof. Kemal Önen took over, serving until 1996 to make him the longest-serving chairman of TSN. Prof. Ekrem Erek was the president of the association between 1996 and 2000, Prof. Kamil Serdengeçti

between 2000 and 2008, Prof. Gültekin Süleymanlar between 2008 and 2014 and Prof. Turgay Arınsoy between 2014 and 2017. From November 2017 to the present day, the position has been held by Prof. Kenan Ateş.

As of the last election, the board of directors has been composed of the following members: Prof. Kenan Ateş (president), Prof. Alaattin Yıldız (vice president), Prof. Mustafa Arıcı (secretary-general), Prof. Ali Rıza Odabaş (treasurer), Prof. Siren Sezer, Prof. Halil Zeki Tonbul and Prof. Bülent Tokgöz.

## Society Membership

As per the statute of the society, nephrology and pediatric nephrology specialists and assistants can become full members of TSN. The number of society members, which was eight at the time of its establishment and 23 at the beginning of 1971, has gradually increased over the years, reaching a total of 590 today. Currently, 96% of the members are nephrologists or nephrology assistants (84% are adult nephrologists, and 16% are pediatric nephrologists). Besides, seven foreign scientists, who have made significant contributions to Turkish nephrology, were granted honorary membership.

## Branches of the Society

In order to expand the activities of the society throughout Turkey and to ensure broader participation, the first branch was established in Antalya in 1997, followed by new branches in Izmir, Kayseri, and Istanbul in 2000, Bursa in 2004, Konya in 2005, Adana in 2006, and Anka-



ra in 2007. The Konya branch subsequently dissolved itself. The branches organize regional activities in line with the aims and working areas of the society.

### Permanent Committees

**The Registry and Statistics Committee:** This committee was established with the aim of collecting, analyzing, and publishing data related to nephrology, hypertension, dialysis, and transplantation across Turkey, planning and implementing epidemiological research, and cooperating with international organizations in data sharing and the facilitation of collaborative studies. Prof. Ekrem Erek, Prof. Kamil Serdengeçti, and Prof. Gültekin Süleymanlar served as presidents of this committee, respectively. Since 1990, the committee has focused on collecting data related to nephrology, dialysis, and transplantation in a center-based manner, and, following the subsequent analyses, publishing the results in a series of books entitled Registry of the Nephrology, Dialysis, and Transplantation in Turkey. In 2019, the 29th book in the series was published. This series of books, which are unprecedented in any other national association, remains an essential source of reference for researchers, both in Turkey and the World seeking to obtain Turkish data on these topics. Besides, these books are also used by the health authorities and other institutions for the planning of dialysis and transplantation services. The books have been published in Turkish and English since 2000. The data related to Turkey has been present in the section B of the European Dialysis and Transplant Association–The European Renal Association (EDTA–ERA) Registry since 2001 and in the section of international comparisons of the United States Renal Data System since 2003, which allows for the comparison of the dialysis and transplantation results of the country with other data from the United States and Europe.

**The Journal and the Editorial Board:** The primary purpose of this editorial board is to regularly publish the Turkish Journal of Nephrology, Dialysis, and Transplantation, and its supplementary issues. The Turkish Journal of Nephrology, Dialysis, and Transplantation was first published under Prof. Ekrem Erek editorship. Following this, Prof. Emel Akoğlu, Prof. Cengiz Utaş, Prof. Bülent Altun and Prof. Bülent Tokgöz have all served as editors. As of 2019, the journal is being published in English with its new title, the Turkish Journal of Nephrology. The journal, which is currently indexed by the Web of Science-Emerging Sources Citation Index, Scopus, EBSCO, and the TUBITAK ULAK-BIM TR index, is expected to become available in PubMed in the near future.

**The Renal Disaster Task Force:** This committee was established under the presidency of Prof. Ekrem Erek and under the coordination of Prof. Mehmet Şükrü Sever following the earthquake of August 17, 1999, which hit the Marmara region of Turkey and led to the loss of 17,000 citizens. Prof. Mehmet Şükrü Sever held the position of chairman of the committee for many years, while today, this position is held by Prof. Serhan Tuğlular.

The committee provided essential services in the organization of domestic and international aid activities, conducting chronic dialysis services, and arranging the treatment of patients with crush syndrome following the Marmara earthquake. The task force collected and analyzed the data of 639 cases with crush syndrome from the Marmara Earthquake, and later published 27 related articles in international journals. In addition, the book entitled Crush Syndrome and Lessons Learned from the Marmara Earthquake was written by Prof. Mehmet Şükrü Sever, which was subsequently published in English by Karger Publishing. Meanwhile, more than 30 training meetings were organized in Turkey under the leadership of Prof. Mehmet Şükrü Sever, while numerous national guidelines were created, and the task force contributed to various international guidelines. In addition, the task force actively contributed to the relief efforts following the Bingöl (2003) and Van (2011) earthquakes in Turkey, as well as Iran, Pakistan, and Haiti earthquakes.

**Turkish Board of Nephrology:** This committee was established in 2004 with the aim of establishing, maintaining and raising the standards of nephrology specialty education, providing quality control, performing accreditation studies, conducting standard exams after the specialty education, providing a nephrology proficiency certificate, and encouraging and supervising the participation in continuous medical education activities. Prof. Kenan Ateş has been the president of the committee since its establishment. The committee has prepared the Nephrology Specialist Training Principles and the Nephrology Core Curriculum and conducts proficiency exams since 2008. A total of 75 nephrologists have been awarded the competency certificate as a result of the 12 examinations conducted thus far. In addition, a significant contribution was made to the preparation of the Nephrology Core Curriculum of the Medical Specialization Committee. Quality and accreditation studies are planned to begin in the near future. The committee is represented at the Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes and the European Board of Nephrology, formerly by Prof. Oğuz Söylemezoğlu, Prof. Cem Sungur and Prof. Tevfik Ecder and currently by Prof. Mustafa Arıcı.

**Term Committee:** This committee was founded in 2003 with the aim of protecting the Turkish language as the language of science and using it properly. Prof. Taner Çamsarı has been the president of the committee since its establishment. The committee, which regularly publishes the Term Committee Bulletin, organized the 1<sup>st</sup> Turkish Language of Medicine Symposium in May 2019.

**Working Groups:** Working groups were established in 2002 to conduct regional and international epidemiological, clinical, and experimental studies on issues related to basic and clinical nephrology, hypertension, dialysis, and transplantation, to produce and disseminate information, to determine the scientific and clinical practice standards and prepare guidelines of Turkey on related issues, to consult TSN's executive board and other

committees, and to establish health policies. The society currently has 10 working groups focusing on the following areas: acute kidney injury and intensive care nephrology; nutrition and metabolism; diabetic kidney disease; glomerular diseases; hypertension; cystic kidney diseases; mineral and bone disorders; peritoneal dialysis; renal anemia; and transplantation. The groups organize scientific meetings both during national meetings and on an independent basis, as well as conduct scientific research and prepare guidelines on related topics. Finally, the Diagnosis and Treatment of Primary Glomerular Diseases: National Consensus Report was prepared by the Glomerular Diseases Working Group, and the Hypertension Working Group contributed to the Turkish Hypertension Consensus Report. The national consensus report on diabetic kidney disease is currently under preparation.

### The Turkish Society of Nephrology Website

The website of the TSN was built in 2000 at [www.tsn.org.tr](http://www.tsn.org.tr). Information on events organized by the society, as well as other general useful information and current announcements, are available through this website. In 2018, the Website and Social Media Group was established within the society, and a new website was launched with a new domain name at [www.nefroloji.org.tr](http://www.nefroloji.org.tr). In addition, the society is represented through social media channels, including Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

### National Scientific Meetings

One of the most important activities of the TSN is to organize scientific meetings to contribute to the education of physicians and nurses working in the field of nephrology. The first national congress was held in 1980 in Bursa under the supervision of Prof. Aydoğın Öbek. However, after the military coup of 1980, the activities of TSN, much like those of all other associations, were halted, and the scientific meetings had to be suspended. In 1985, the Innovations in Nephrology Congress was held in Erzurum under Prof. Ayla San's chairmanship, and, since then, a total of 36 congresses were held at regular intervals under the name of National Kidney Disease, Hypertension, Dialysis and Transplantation Congress. The name of the annual congress was changed to National Nephrology Congress in 2019. Each year, some 1,100–1,300 people attend the national congresses, making them the most successful meetings in Turkey for the covered topics.

Winter School of Nephrology is another regular national scientific activity of the society. These meetings, initiated under the leadership of Prof. Cengiz Utaş, make a significant contribution, especially to the continuous training of physicians dealing with dialysis. A total of 18 winter schools was organized, the first of which was in 2002. The winter schools are generally attended by 350 to 500 participants.

In addition to these, nephrology subspecialty education meetings, dialysis schools, transplantation intensive training programs, and various regional activities are organized in order to

contribute to the continuous training of young nephrologists and nephrology specialty students.

### International Scientific Meetings

Through the close relations established with associations such as the International Society of Nephrology (ISN), EDTA-ERA, and the International Society for Peritoneal Dialysis (ISPD), Turkey hosted many international congresses, and several joint meetings held with the participation of these associations.

- The 15<sup>th</sup> EDTA Congress was organized under the chairmanship of Prof. Kemal Önen in Istanbul between 4-7 June 1978. The congress, attended by approximately 1,500 people, went on record as the biggest and most successful congress of the EDTA at the time.

- The 42<sup>nd</sup> ERA-EDTA Congress was held between 4-7 June 2005 in Istanbul under the chairmanship of Prof. Kamil Serdengeçti. This was the most successful congress of ERA-EDTA up until then in terms of participants (6,135 people from 100 countries) and the number of abstracts (1,959).

- The 50<sup>th</sup> ERA-EDTA Congress was held with a total of 7,634 participants between 18-21 May 2013 in Istanbul under the chairmanship of Prof. Gültekin Süleymanlar. Organizing ERA-EDTA's 50th congress in Turkey was a great honor for the Turkish nephrology community.

- The 12<sup>th</sup> ISPD Congress was held between 20-24 June 2008 in Istanbul under the chairmanship of Prof. Cengiz Utaş. Some 2,169 people from 73 countries participated in the congress.

- The 4<sup>th</sup> BANTAO Congress was held in İzmir in 1999, and the 9<sup>th</sup> BANTAO Congress was held in Antalya in 2009.

- The 9<sup>th</sup> International Geriatric Nephrology and Urology Conference was held in 2007 in Antalya under the chairmanship of Prof. Fevzi Ersoy.

- In addition, approximately 50 joint meetings were held during national congresses or independently, in cooperation with international associations. One of the most important of these is the Giants of Nephrology in Istanbul meeting held on June 5, 2000, on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of TSN and the 40th anniversary of the ISN. A similar meeting will be held in Istanbul under the name KidneyIST between 5-6 March 2020 within the scope of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of TSN.

### Duties in International Associations

As a result of the efforts of the TSN to expand internationally and to develop relations, many of our members have held important positions in international associations. For example, Prof. Ali Başçı (2002-2005), Prof. Cengiz Utaş (2005-2008), Prof. Gültekin Süleymanlar (2008-2011), Prof. Mehmet Şükrü Sever (2012-2015) and Prof. Mustafa Arıcı (2015-2018) served as Coun-

Members of the ERA-EDTA, while Prof. Kamil Serdengeçti was elected as a member of the ISN Council from 2005–2011. Presently, Prof. Rümeyza Kazancıoğlu is a member of the ISN Council, while Prof. Mustafa Arıcı is a member of KDIGO. In addition, Prof. Mehmet Şükrü Sever, Prof. Kültigin Türkmen, Prof. Sevcan Bakkaloğlu, and Prof. Mehmet Kanbay currently serve on various committees of ERA-EDTA.

#### Books Published by the Turkish Society of Nephrology

The TSN has published 36 books, 23 of which were licensed and 13 of which were translations for the benefit of the readers, in line with its mission to raise the level of education in the areas of nephrology, hypertension, dialysis, and transplantation in Turkey. Currently, two licensed books are being prepared for publication. In addition, TSN's Website and Social Media Group has been publishing summaries and reviews of several articles published in high impact journals since 2018 under the name Nefroblog.

4

#### Scholarships to Study Abroad and Other Supports

Since 2000, the TSN has been awarding scholarships to young nephrologists and nephropathologists for studying abroad. The first fellowship was awarded to Dr. Ercan Ok from the Nephrology Department of Ege University School of Medicine, who traveled to the USA. Since then, a total of 60 young researchers, including 48 nephrologists and 12 nephropathologists, benefited from the TSN training scholarship for periods of between 3 and 12 months. TSN also provides financial support to its members when participating in national and international congresses and for article publication bonuses.

#### Epidemiological Studies

Chronic kidney disease is a significant public health problem, affecting approximately 10% of adults worldwide. In order to define the prevalence and distribution of chronic kidney disease and the related risk factors in Turkey, between 2006 and 2008, TSN conducted the Chronic Kidney Disease Prevalence in Turkey Study (CREDIT) in 23 provinces across the country, with the participation of 10,750 adults and 5,000 children. In this study, the prevalence of chronic kidney disease in our country was found to be 15.7%. The results of the study were presented at multiple national and international meetings and were subsequently published in four separate articles in international journals.

The second stage of the CREDIT study (CREDIT-Incidence), which aimed to determine the incidence and course of chronic kidney disease, was performed with the participation of a total of 4,243 individuals between 2011 and 2013. This study found that the prevalence of chronic kidney disease in Turkey had decreased slightly from that recorded in the previous study.

The preparations for a new epidemiological study aimed at determining the prevalence, distribution according to the stages, and risk factors of diabetic kidney disease, have been completed. The plan is now to execute the study in the first half of 2020.

#### Kidney Diseases Prevention and Control Program in Turkey

After the serious dimensions of the problem of chronic kidney disease in Turkey were revealed through the CREDIT study, with the initiatives of TSN, the Turkish Kidney Diseases Prevention and Control Program was prepared under the leadership of the Ministry of Health's Public Health Institute alongside an action plan covering the years 2014-2017. Currently, an action plan covering the years 2018-2022 is being implemented, with significant contributions from TSN.

#### Activities Directed to Public

TSN, which has continued its educational and scientific work for the development of kidney science in Turkey without interruption for 50 years, organizes various activities to increase public consciousness and awareness of kidney health and disease and to emphasize the importance of early diagnosis per its social responsibility. These activities are summarized below:

**World Kidney Day:** Starting from 2006, every year, the second Thursday of March is celebrated as World Kidney Day by the ISN and the International Federation of Kidney Foundations. Every year since 2006, TSN and its branches have organized numerous activities on World Kidney Day to raise public awareness of kidney health and disease, emphasizing the importance of early diagnosis and informing the public about the heavy burden of kidney disease on both human health and the national economy. Details of these studies can be found on the World Kidney Day website ([www.worldkidneyday.org](http://www.worldkidneyday.org)) and the TSN website ([www.nefroloji.org.tr](http://www.nefroloji.org.tr)).

**Kidney Health Bus:** TSN, which is committed to taking an active role in social responsibility projects concerning the community, realized the Kidney Health Bus project during its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. During the 75-day project, which started in Antalya on September 23, 2010, and ended in İzmir on December 5, 2010, a total of 21 cities were visited, and approximately 50,000 people who visited the bus were informed about kidney health and disease through brochure distribution, video screening, and information-based meetings. In addition, 6,483 people were screened for kidney disease and the attendant risk factors.

**Attention Health Contest:** In order to inform the public about healthy living and kidney disease, TSN organized a competition program entitled "Attention Health" on TRT Ankara Radio between January 2010 and December 2010, lasting for a total of 50 weeks. In this program, a separate topic was discussed every week, and the audience was first asked three "right or wrong?" questions before the relevant information was conveyed by the board members of TSN (Prof. Kenan Ateş, Prof. Bülent Altun and Prof. Gültekin Süleymanlar), who were contacted by telephone.

**Organ Donation Cartoon Contest:** A cartoon contest was organized in 2010 to encourage organ donation. The resulting works of art were collected in a book, exhibited during the national congress, and used in various community-oriented activities.

The TSN plans to give a start to various social responsibility projects in its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, 2020.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The TSN has taken essential steps in the name of institutionalization, opening itself up to the international arena and achieving the objectives stated in its original statute, created some 50

years ago. The society will continue its activities with increasing momentum in 2020 and the following years, and it will continue to carry out successful works.

**Prof. Dr. Kenan ATEŞ**

**President of the Turkish Society of Nephrology**