

## ***Turkish Nephrology, the Turkish Society of Nephrology and its Relationship With the International Society of Nephrology***

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I have been privileged to be associated with Turkish nephrology during the last ten years and I have learned much about your history. Kemal Önen of the Istanbul Medical Faculty launched Turkey's first department of nephrology in Istanbul in 1965, and five years later, in 1970, the Turkish Society of Nephrology was launched. Professor Önen made a major contribution to electrolyte and water pathophysiology. The intervening thirty-six years have evidenced a steady rise in both the quality and quantity of renal care available in Turkey. In 1965, regular hemodialysis was introduced and the first kidney transplant took place in 1975 at the Hacettepe University Hospital in Ankara. In 1978 the ERA-EDTA met in Istanbul for the first time, a milestone showing Turkish leadership in European nephrology. The International Society has been very actively involved in nephrology in Turkey for the past decade. In 1997 an ISN group made its first visit to Istanbul on the occasion of the "ISN-COMGAN & TSN Update in Nephrology" meeting. It was an outstanding cast of speakers including Craig Tischer, Richard Glasscock, Eberhard Ritz, Robert Schrier, Norbert Lameire and John Dirks, and was very well received. This was the beginning of a close relationship between the ISN and Turkish nephrologists that led to a collective membership in ISN by every single nephrologist member of the TSN in 2004. ISN has been well represented at every annual congress of the Turkish Nephrology Society since that time. This year will mark the 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress, and once again speakers from ISN will enthusiastically participate. It is said that the mutual relationship between ISN and TSN has greatly strengthened the Turkish Society.

Kemal Önen was the first TSN President, followed by Professor Ekrem Erek, (1995-2000) and the current President, Kamil Serdengeçti. They have provided the superb leadership that has been the cornerstone of the expansion of nephrology in every area. All have always worked collegially with ISN in planning meetings. They have been assisted by a number of outstanding nephrologists including Mehmet Sever, Cengiz Utaş, Gültekin Süleymanlar, Rezzan Ataman, Fevzi Ersoy and others. There are now 324 members and seven very active branches that hold regular meetings and courses of their own. The TSN established an excellent renal registry and since 1991 have published yearly booklets (Registry of Nephrology, Dialysis and Transplantation in Turkey) based on data from the registry. The annual report has a major impact on clinical practices.

Since 1970, the number of dialysis units in Turkey has grown to 577. Over 33 000 patients per year receive HD, and slightly more than 4900 receive PD. In 2001 the calculated gross mortality rate was 8.3%, which is comparable to rates in the EU and Japan, and lower than the USA.

Since the first successful renal transplant from a living donor, by Dr Mehmet Haberal, took place in 1975 Turkish nephrology has never looked back. About 900 patients per year now receive transplants in 25 different centers, of which approximately 73% involve live donors. Growth in this area, as in many countries, has been slow, and is not enough to meet the demand.

During the past decade, two earthquakes in Turkey occurred, first near Izmit (1999) and the second at Bingöl (2003). After the first earthquake, 639 victims with ARF related to crush syndrome were treated. At the Bingöl earthquake, the by then experienced TSN Disaster Relief Task Force, led by Mehmet Sever, activated in the field rapid re-hydration of patients with crush injury. The Turkish nephrologists are now the most skilled experts in this type of disaster and have made a real contribution to the earthquake response problem, both within and outside ISN. The Task Force worked with the ISN Task Force once again during the recent conflict.

Since 2000, 1000 general physicians have joined 300 Turkish nephrologists and 400 nurses annually at meetings in places like Istanbul, Izmir, Antalya, and Cappadocia. The growth in such meetings is not only in attendance, but also more significantly, in scientific contributions and intellectual debate. Testament to this growth is the amount of first class clinical research being generated by Turkish nephrologists. They are now amongst the leaders in submitting abstracts to the ISN and ERA meetings. Between 1999 and 2002 Italy was the only European country to submit more abstracts than Turkey to ERA conferences. In the 2001 ERA Congress in Vienna, Turkish nephrologists won eight of the best young authors' awards. At the WCN in Berlin in 2003, more than 219 abstracts were submitted from Turkey. At the 2005 ERA-EDTA Congress in Istanbul hosted by TSN, with its 258 submitted & 117 accepted abstracts Turkey ranked first in the number of submitted abstracts and second in the number of accepted abstracts. Between 1960 and 2000 Turkish nephrologists published 840 articles in peer reviewed international journals. However, the greatest testament to the rapid and successful growth of Turkish nephrology is the fact that 735 of these came between 1990 and 2000.

There is still a need for more basic research in Turkey, as in all middle-income countries. However in its decade of association with ISN, Turkish nephrology has grown steadily in both activity and reputation. ISN has contributed to this growth through the participation of its members in the annual TSN Congress (now one of the largest of the annual meetings); the Fellowship Program, which has trained 20 young physicians since 1985, including five in the past four years; and the Visiting Senior Scholars Program whereby senior scientists from the developed world visit and teach in the developing world.

In recent years prevention of CKD in terms of basic science, epidemiological studies and clinical intervention has been a major item at meetings, and these have involved ISN speakers. The Society is very pleased that Turkish nephrologists are taking leadership in the implementation of prevention as an approach to chronic kidney disease.

I have spoken at 7 TSN Congresses and have looked forward each fall to my visits to this beautiful and hospitable country. The meetings have grown to include over 1800 participants each year, including not only physicians, but also nurses and other health professionals. The meetings are invariably well organized, intellectually stimulating and collegial, and it is very rewarding to have been involved, in however small a way, with the growth of nephrology in Turkey. I look forward to being in Antalya for the 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress and to share our experiences. It is a pleasure to be in a place blessed by many archeological sites, at the crossroads of some of the world's great cultural and religious influences.