Acute Kidney Injury

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Acute Kidney Injury

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63 figures, 2 in color, and 40 tables, 2007
Contents

XI Preface
Ronco, C. (Vicenza); Bellomo, R. (Melbourne, Vic.); Kellum, J.A. (Pittsburgh, Pa.)

Critical Care Nephrology Issues

1 Pre-Renal Azotemia: A Flawed Paradigm in Critically Ill Septic Patients?
Bellomo, R.; Bagshaw, S.; Langenberg, C. (Melbourne, Vic.); Ronco, C. (Vicenza)

10 The Concept of Acute Kidney Injury and the RIFLE Criteria
Kellum, J.A. (Pittsburgh, Pa.); Bellomo, R. (Melbourne, Vic.); Ronco, C. (Vicenza)

17 The Liver and the Kidney: Mutual Clearance or Mixed Intoxication
Arroyo, V. (Barcelona)

24 Critical Care Nephrology: A Multidisciplinary Approach
Vincent, J.-L. (Brussels)

Epidemiology and Pathogenesis of AKI, Sepsis and MOF

32 Incidence, Classification, and Outcomes of Acute Kidney Injury
Hoste, E.A.J. (Ghent/Pittsburgh, Pa.); Kellum, J.A. (Pittsburgh, Pa.)

39 Pathophysiology of Acute Kidney Injury: Roles of Potential Inhibitors of Inflammation
Bonventre, J.V. (Boston, Mass.)
47  **Sepsis and Multiple Organ Failure**  
Pinsky, M.R. (Pittsburgh, Pa.)

64  **Classification, Incidence, and Outcomes of Sepsis and Multiple Organ Failure**  
Vincent, J.-L.; Taccone, F.; Schmit, X. (Brussels)

---

### Evaluation of Illness Severity

75  **Genetic Polymorphisms in Sepsis- and Cardiopulmonary Bypass-Associated Acute Kidney Injury**  

92  **Predictive Capacity of Severity Scoring Systems in the ICU**  
Schusterschitz, N.; Joannidis, M. (Innsbruck)

101  **Determining the Degree of Immunodysregulation in Sepsis**  
Cavaillon, J.-M.; Adib-Conquy, M. (Paris)

---

### Metabolism, Electrolytes and Acid-Base Disorders

112  **Nutritional Management in Acute Illness and Acute Kidney Insufficiency**  
Leverve, X.M. (Grenoble); Cano, N.J.M. (Marseille)

119  **Fundamentals of Oxygen Delivery**  
Yassin, J.; Singer, M. (London)

133  **Principals of Hemodynamic Monitoring**  
Polanco, P.M.; Pinsky, M.R. (Pittsburgh, Pa.)

158  **Acid-Base Disorders and Strong Ion Gap**  
Kellum, J.A. (Pittsburgh, Pa.)

167  **Fluid Resuscitation and the Septic Kidney: The Evidence**  
Licari, E.; Calzavacca, P. (Melbourne, Vic.); Ronco, C. (Vicenza); Bellomo, R. (Melbourne, Vic.)

---

### Nursing Issues in Critical Care Nephrology

178  **Factors Affecting Circuit Patency and Filter ‘Life’**  
Baldwin, I. (Melbourne, Vic.)

185  **Starting up a Continuous Renal Replacement Therapy Program on ICU**  
De Becker, W. (Leuven)
191 Is There a Need for a Nurse Emergency Team for Continuous Renal Replacement Therapy?  
Baldwin, I. (Melbourne, Vic.)

197 Information Technology for CRRT and Dose Delivery Calculator  
Ricci, Z. (Rome/Vicenza); Ronco, C. (Vicenza)

Early Diagnosis and Prevention of AKI

203 Emerging Biomarkers of Acute Kidney Injury  
Devarajan, P. (Cincinnati, Ohio)

213 Diagnosis of Acute Kidney Injury: From Classic Parameters to New Biomarkers  
Bonventre, J.V. (Boston, Mass.)

220 Endotoxin and Cytokine Detection Systems as Biomarkers for Sepsis-Induced Renal Injury  
Opal, S.M. (Providence, R.I.)

227 Quantifying Dynamic Kidney Processes Utilizing Multi-Photon Microscopy  
Molitoris, B.A.; Sandoval, R.M. (Indianapolis, Ind.)

236 Diuretics in the Management of Acute Kidney Injury: A Multinational Survey  
Bagshaw, S.M. (Melbourne, Vic./Edmonton, Alta.); Delaney, A. (Sydney/St. Leonards); Jones, D. (Melbourne, Vic.); Ronco, C. (Vicenza); Bellomo, R. (Melbourne, Vic.)

250 Stem Cells in Acute Kidney Injury  
Bussolati, B.; Camussi, G. (Turin)

Practice Patterns for RRT in the ICU

259 Anticoagulation Options for Patients with Heparin-Induced Thrombocytopenia Requiring Renal Support in the Intensive Care Unit  
Davenport, A. (London)

267 Nutritional Support during Renal Replacement Therapy  
Chioléro, R.; Berger, M.M. (Lausanne)

275 Vascular Access for HD and CRRT  
Schetz, M. (Leuven)

287 Dialysate and Replacement Fluid Composition for CRRT  
Aucella, F.; Di Paolo, S.; Gesualdo, L. (Foggia)
297 Results from International Questionnaires
Ricci, Z.; Picardo, S. (Rome); Ronco, C. (Vicenza)

Which Treatment for AKI in the ICU

304 Intermittent Hemodialysis for Renal Replacement Therapy in Intensive Care: New Evidence for Old Truths
Van Biesen, W.; Veys, N.; Vanholder, R. (Ghent)

309 Continuous Renal Replacement in Critical Illness
Ronco, C.; Cruz, D. (Vicenza); Bellomo, R. (Melbourne, Vic.)

320 Sustained Low-Efficiency Dialysis
Tolwani, A.J.; Wheeler, T.S.; Wille, K.M. (Birmingham, Ala.)

325 The Role of the International Society of Nephrology/Renal Disaster Relief Task Force in the Rescue of Renal Disaster Victims
Vanholder, R.; Van Biesen, W.; Lameire, N. (Ghent); Sever, M.S. (Istanbul)

Extracorporeal Treatment for Specific Indications

333 Renal Replacement Therapy for the Patient with Acute Traumatic Brain Injury and Severe Acute Kidney Injury
Davenport, A. (London)

340 Cardiopulmonary Bypass-Associated Acute Kidney Injury: A Pigment Nephropathy?
Haase, M.; Haase-Fielitz, A. (Melbourne, Vic./Berlin); Bagshaw, S.M. (Melbourne, Vic.); Ronco, C. (Vicenza); Bellomo, R. (Melbourne, Vic.)

354 CRRT Technology and Logistics: Is There a Role for a Medical Emergency Team in CRRT?
Honoré, P.M. (Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve); Joannes-Boyau, O. (Pessac); Gressens, B. (Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve)

365 Continuous Hemodiafiltration with Cytokine-Adsorbing Hemofilter in the Treatment of Severe Sepsis and Septic Shock
Hirasawa, H.; Oda, S. (Chiba); Matsuda, K. (Yamanashi)

371 Blood and Plasma Treatments: High-Volume Hemofiltration – A Global View
Honoré, P.M. (Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve); Joannes-Boyau, O. (Pessac); Gressens, B. (Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve)

387 Blood and Plasma Treatments: The Rationale of High-Volume Hemofiltration
Honoré, P.M. (Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve); Joannes-Boyau, O. (Pessac); Gressens, B. (Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve)
396 Liver Support Systems
Santoro, A.; Mancini, E.; Ferramosca, E.; Faenza, S. (Bologna)

405 Coupled Plasma Filtration Adsorption
Formica, M.; Inguaggiato, P.; Bainotti, S. (Cuneo); Wratten, M.L. (Mirandola)

411 Albumin Dialysis and Plasma Filtration Adsorption Dialysis System
Nalesso, F.; Brendolan, A.; Crepaldi, C.; Cruz, D.; de Cal, M. (Vicenza);
Bellomo, R. (Melbourne, Vic.); Ronco, C. (Vicenza)

419 Renal Assist Device and Treatment of Sepsis-Induced Acute Kidney Injury in Intensive Care Units
Issa, N.; Messer, J.; Paganini, E.P. (Cleveland, Ohio)

428 Renal Replacement Therapy in Neonates with Congenital Heart Disease
Morelli, S.; Ricci, Z.; Di Chiara, L.; Stazi, G.V.; Polito, A.; Vitale, V.; Giorni, C.;
Iacoella, C.; Picardo, S. (Rome)

New Trials and Meta-Analyses

434 The DOse REsponse Multicentre International Collaborative Initiative (DO-RE-MI)
Monti, G. (Milan); Herrera, M. (Malaga); Kindgen-Milles, D. (Düsseldorf);
Marinho, A. (Porto); Cruz, D. (Vicenza); Mariano, F. (Turin); Gigliola, G. (Cuneo);
Moretti, E. (Bergamo); Alessandri, E. (Rome); Robert, R. (Poitier); Ronco, C. (Vicenza)

444 Clinical Effects of Polymyxin B-Immobilized Fiber Column in Septic Patients
Cruz, D.N. (Vicenza/Quezon City); Bellomo, R. (Melbourne, Vic.);
Ronco, C. (Vicenza)

452 Author Index

454 Subject Index
Preface

Four million people will die this year of a condition whose pathophysiology we do not understand and for which no effective treatment exists. Millions more will sustain complications and prolonged hospitalizations. Acute kidney injury (AKI) is complex syndrome for which treatment is lacking and understanding is limited. Defined as an abrupt change in serum creatinine and/or urine output and classified according the RIFLE (Risk, Injury, Failure, Loss and End-stage kidney disease) criteria, AKI is associated with a more than twofold increase in the risk of death in hospital – even after controlling for other conditions. When severe enough to require renal replacement therapy, AKI results in hospital mortality rates of approximately 60%. Yet, even this severe form of AKI is surprisingly common – nearly 6% of all patients admitted to the ICU.

Moreover, as many as two thirds of patients admitted to the ICU have some evidence of AKI and virtually all may be at risk of this condition. Sepsis, shock, advanced age and exposure to nephrotoxins lead the list of risk factors and many patients have more than one. As such, it is absolutely clear that in order for patients to receive optimal care, the treating physician needs a detailed working knowledge of multiple aspects of care so that appropriate multidisciplinary assistance is sought at the right time and new techniques of organ support are applied in a safe, timely and effective way. In this volume we have combined the contributions of experts in various fields to tackle some of the fundamental and complex aspects of AKI from pathophysiology to epidemiology to diagnosis and treatment; from emerging biomarkers to genetic polymorphisms. We have also included contributions which focus on the many complications of AKI and comorbid conditions encountered in patients with
AKI. From abnormalities in oxygen delivery, hemodynamics and acid-base balance to multi-organ failure, leading experts cover the fundamentals as well as the latest developments.

Because the immune response to infection is central in determining organ injury, this volume also focuses on the role of immune dysregulation in determining renal and lung injury, on the role of immune mediators in inducing dysregulation of the immune response, and on the role of genetics in determining such a response. The roles of nutritional support, metabolic management and fluid resuscitation in modulating the immune response and influencing patient outcomes are also considered. As extracorporeal therapies are being increasingly used in the care of these complex patients, we focus on important technical aspects of such therapies, including vascular access, anticoagulation, and fluid composition as well as the logistics of starting continuous renal replacement therapy programs and keeping them running. As the choice of treatment modality remains controversial, we also discuss different approaches to renal support from intermittent dialysis to continuous therapies and hybrid techniques. Finally, we conclude with a description of advanced extracorporeal techniques of organ support and discuss their role in the management of sepsis and AKI in the context of an overall strategy of multi-organ failure management.

The overall aim of this volume of the Contributions to Nephrology series is to provide the medical community involved in the care of critically ill patients with AKI with a practical and up-to-date summary of current knowledge and technology as well as a fundamental understanding of pathogenesis and likely future developments in this field. Just as importantly, this volume serves to challenge and reexamine the fundamental underlying assumptions we hold with regard to critical illness in general and AKI in particular. By reexamining age-old paradigms such as ‘pre-renal azotemia’ and looking to redefine the concepts of acute renal disease, we can expect to stumble and fall but in the end find ourselves in a new and better place. Critical care nephrology is an interdisciplinary field and it is through the continued work of basic, clinical, and translational researchers from numerous disciplines, and clinicians who will always drive the field forward, that together we will realize our ambition to improve the standard of care for patients with AKI, worldwide.

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