

## MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

### Early diagnosis of kidney disease helps patients and saves health care dollars

*Vancouver, BC* – Over the past ten years the annual increase in the number of British Columbians with failing kidneys who need dialysis to stay alive has dropped from 16 percent to just three percent a year – the lowest growth rate in the country.

With an average cost for dialysis of \$45,000 per patient every year, this reduction in the growth of end-stage kidney disease has provided much needed savings for the province's health care budget and tremendous benefits for kidney patients and their loved ones. Between 2007 and 2008, for example, BC's system of renal care avoided \$3.2 million in dialysis costs, while also improving health outcomes for individual patients.

These results have been achieved in large part through a strategy spearheaded by the BC Renal Agency, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, of identifying people with kidney disease at an early stage of the disease, before the need for dialysis.

“The success of our early identification strategy in helping us to control the growth of acute kidney disease in B.C. is based on a number of key initiatives,” says BC Renal Agency executive director, Dr. Adeera Levin.

In 2003, all medical labs in the province started automatically sending BC's doctors simplified reports about their patient's kidney health every time a blood test was ordered. This province-wide program was the first of its kind in North America.

At the same time, the Renal Agency began informing doctors about chronic kidney disease (CKD), the early-stage form of the disease, through clinical practice guidelines sent to every doctor in the province, and offering education programs. In 2001, the agency also began funding the creation of CKD clinics across the province, staffed by multidisciplinary teams of health professionals, including kidney specialists, nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, social workers and others.

As a result of these and other measures, many British Columbians with kidney disease are now diagnosed before significant symptoms of the disease have appeared, and while their kidneys are still functioning relatively well. In fact, the average level of kidney function for British Columbians diagnosed with CKD today is 15 per cent higher than it was for patients in 2003.

“Early diagnosis of the disease is critical,” says Dr. Levin, “because early intervention, including medication, diet and lifestyle changes, can be very effective in delaying and even stopping the progression of kidney disease, allowing patients a much better chance of avoiding dialysis or the need for a transplant.”

On the strength of these results and many other significant innovations, BC's renal network is now internationally recognized for its leadership in improving outcomes for kidney patients and maintaining system sustainability.

**MORE**



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Agency**  
An agency of the Provincial  
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The foundation  
of kidney care.

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## **Backgrounder**

### ***Are Your Kidneys OK?***

Test your knowledge of kidney disease by filling out the quiz posted throughout Kidney Month at [www.bcrenalagency.ca](http://www.bcrenalagency.ca). At the end of March, random draws will be made and prizes awarded.

### ***What are some of the symptoms to look for?***

In the early stages of kidney disease, many individuals experience no symptoms. However, common early symptoms of kidney disease include: foamy or bloody urine; a frequent need to urinate at night; headaches; and puffy eyes or ankles.

### ***Why is there a Kidney Month?***

While patients with kidney disease in British Columbia have some of the best outcomes in the country and a broad range of care options, early diagnosis and treatment are essential to achieve the best patient outcomes, as changes to diet or medication can slow or even stop the progress of kidney disease.

### ***During the March Drive...***

More than 8,000 Kidney Foundation volunteers will canvass homes across BC to raise awareness and funds for research and patient programs.

### ***Where can I find out more about World Kidney Day?***

[www.worldkidneyday.org](http://www.worldkidneyday.org)

### ***Where can I learn more about kidney disease?***

[www.bcrenalagency.ca](http://www.bcrenalagency.ca)  
[www.kidney.bc.ca](http://www.kidney.bc.ca)

The BC Renal Agency ([www.bcrenalagency.ca](http://www.bcrenalagency.ca)) and the Kidney Foundation of Canada, BC Branch ([www.kidney.bc.ca](http://www.kidney.bc.ca)) are good sources of information for patients and their families. The BC Renal Agency, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, has an informative DVD (English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Punjabi and Tagalog versions) featuring patients who tell their stories about living and dealing positively with kidney disease. The DVD can be ordered through the agency's online order form. It can also be viewed online (English only).