

## Profiles in Kidney Care – October 2008

### Profile: Record attendance for Nephrology Days!

A record number of people from BC's renal community attended the 2008 BC Nephrology Days conference, held October 2 and 3 in Vancouver. Featuring a diverse program of presentations, this year's conference drew 513 attendees, ten percent more than last year.

Leaving on a high note, Dr. Gerry Karr stepped down as Nephrology Days chair this year after six years of providing leadership for the event. Over that time Dr. Karr was encouraged by its continued growth and says the event has shifted from being procedure-focused to now having a strong patient focus.

"There is much more emphasis now at BC Nephrology Days on the team concept," says Dr. Karr, "and on the needs and interests of everyone involved in renal care, toward improving overall care for our patients."

Another change he has seen in recent years has been a broadening of scope for the event, with presentations that go well beyond the subject of just kidney disease. The event now features presentations on "all kinds of issues related to chronic illness," says Dr. Karr, "including things like depression and the importance of communication."

Dr. Karr was honoured for his dedicated service to Nephrology Days with a special plaque, presented to him by BC Provincial Renal Agency executive director, Dr. Adeera Levin.

This year's event also featured a presentation of the fifth annual Wilma Crocket Memorial Award to Interior Health renal nurse, Debbie Eggers.

Among the many information sessions at this year's event was a session about transplant tourism. Every year about 66,000 people worldwide receive a kidney transplant. Because the supply of kidneys for donation is much lower than the demand from people with end-stage kidney disease, up to ten percent of organ recipients go to Third World countries to acquire their new kidney, typically from an impoverished local donor. The practice entails considerable risk, and recently prompted a [response](#) from The Transplantation society and the International Society of Nephrology.

This year's event also included a presentation about the negative health effects of phosphorous in our daily diet. Phosphorous levels are an especially serious concern for people with kidney disease. However, recent [research](#) has found that the increasing use of



Dr. Gerry Karr, Interior Health renal program medical director, is recognized for his six years as chair of BC Nephrology Days with a plaque presented at the event by BC Provincial Renal Agency executive director, Dr. Adeera Levin.



phosphates in processed food products is also associated with a higher risk of heart disease for people from the general population.

Another presentation focused on medication errors – a significant concern for patients with kidney disease, which generally requires more drugs for treatment than other chronic conditions. Efforts by the BCPRA to improve drug safety for renal patients at all points of care across the province are putting BC at the forefront of the growing [medication reconciliation](#) movement in Canada.

Presentations from this year's conference are available on the [Nephrology Days Website](#).