

ASSIST-CKD: Scaling up an intervention to improve the management of progressive chronic kidney disease (CKD) in primary care

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Nearly two million people in the UK have been diagnosed with moderate-severe CKD but a further one million are thought to be undiagnosed as often there are no symptoms.

Kidney Research UK is leading a UK-wide project called ASSIST-CKD: a programme to spread eGFR graph surveillance for the early identification, support and treatment of people with progressive CKD. The project aims to improve the identification of a small but very important minority of patients with declining kidney function which will allow earlier intervention and treatment so that the number of people starting dialysis in an unplanned manner can be reduced. The ultimate goal is to reduce the numbers of people who need a kidney transplant or dialysis treatment.

Using dedicated software, the pathology laboratories involved, combine data from routine blood tests to create graphs of kidney function (eGFR) over time. For patients with deteriorating kidney function, a report, including the graph, is sent to the GP with a prompt that specialist advice may be required.

Resources are also provided to improve patients' understanding of CKD and practical advice on self-management and lifestyle changes that can help to slow down the progression of their kidney disease.

ASSIST-CKD runs from July 2015-March 2018 and involves:

- Up to 19 main renal units
- 25 laboratories
- Surrounding GP practices covering a population of 11-12 million people

Building on earlier work

- The percentage of patients presenting late at HEFT (i.e. within 90 days before starting dialysis), has been the **lowest in the UK** since 2009 (Figure 1)
- The number of patients receiving renal failure treatment has plateaued (Figure 2)
- 74% of local GPs find the eGFR graph reports to be **useful**, and 41% **changed the management** of their patients as a result
- **Cost effective** – £12,000/year to implement (for two labs serving one million people) compared to a cost of £25-30,000/year for one patient on renal replacement.

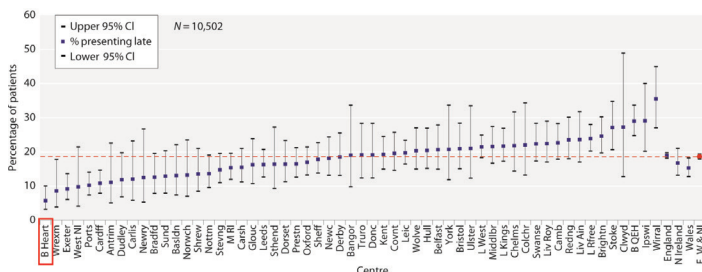
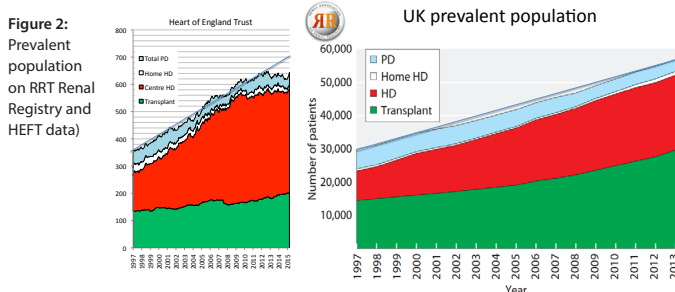


Figure 1: Percentage of patients presenting late for dialysis in the UK (Renal Registry 2012/2013)



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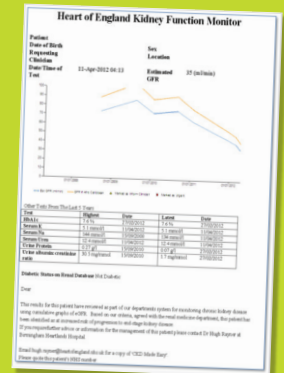
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“There is a UK-wide focus on improving the management of CKD and this project has enormous potential to provide better and safer care in a cost-effective manner.

ASSIST-CKD is a collaboration between patients, kidney doctors and nurses, laboratory scientists and the primary care team which should benefit both patients and clinicians.

We hope to demonstrate that the programme can be effective in other areas outside of the West Midlands, which should create a powerful case for universal adoption of the service across the UK.”

Dr Hugh Gallagher, Project Lead for ASSIST-CKD



Sample graph

Patient Project Team

The charity recognises the importance of patient and carer involvement at all stages of the research process, and a dedicated Project Patient Team ensures that patients' voices are strongly represented throughout the ASSIST-CKD project. Members will:

- Promote awareness of the project and wider research
- Develop patient-facing materials
- Provide general and impartial support
- Help to tell people about the results of the study

Implications for Primary Care

- A simple but effective evidence-based intervention based in the pathology laboratory to highlight CKD patients at highest risk
- No major impact on workload, but enhances practice within current capacity
- Number of graphs received is low (2-3 per GP practice/month)
- Improved co-ordination between primary care and secondary care
- Better referral management (no significant increase seen at pilot site), and anticipated reduction in unplanned bed days (via reduced emergency starts on dialysis)
- We hope to see delays in kidney disease progression and a reduction in numbers developing end-stage renal failure

For further details on the ASSIST-CKD project, please contact assist@kidneyresearchuk.org or visit: www.kidneyresearchuk.org/assist-ckd

Project supported by:

