Knowing 'System' Paves Way For Transplant

Ed Susman

Patients in desperate need of a kidney transplant are more likely to get on the organ transplant list if they are better versed in the intricacies of the healthcare system and their disease, researchers suggested here at the National Kidney Foundation spring meetings.

Patients who were listed for transplant scored an average 60.6 on the REALM-T (Rapid Estimate of Adult Health Literacy-Transplant) while those who were not listed for transplant earned an average 48.69 ($P<0.05$), said Abby Swanson Kazley, PhD, associate professor of Health Care Leadership and Management at Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston.

In her poster presentation, Kazley said that patients with higher scores on other tests of health literacy also were more likely to get on the transplantation list:

- Those who made the waiting list scored a mean of 5.3 on the New Vital Sign Assessment (NVS) compared with 3.95 for those not listed ($P<0.05$)
- Those who were listed scored 15.98 on the Decision-making Capacity Tool (DMCAT) for those listed compared with 11.69 for those not listed. Each of these is statistically significant ($P<0.05$)

Kazley and colleagues followed 92 patients, comparing their health literacy scorecards. Of the group, 53 were eventually placed on the transplant list and 36 of those patients actually underwent a kidney transplant, underscoring the importance of making the list, Kazley told MedPage Today in a telephone interview.

"Physicians need to realize that patients have varying levels of health literacy, and it can impact the care they receive," she said. "Doctors should provide information about patients' conditions in a number of different forms in ways patients can understand."

In transplantation, especially, the ability to handle the complexity of the procedure and the process requires more than basic abilities, she said.

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