Improving care for patients with AKI

Ravindra Mehta received the ISN Shire Bywaters Award 2011.

The Shire Bywaters Award was established by the ISN to recognize outstanding contributions to the understanding of acute renal failure. At this year’s WCN, Ravindra Mehta, professor of medicine at the Division of Nephrology and Associate Chair of Clinical Research at the Department of Medicine, University of California in San Diego, is being honored for his lifetime achievements in this exciting field of nephrology. Mehta directs the Acute Dialysis Program and the UCSD CREST and Masters-in-Clinical Research Program and is an internationally recognized expert in acute kidney injury (AKI). Mehta received his MD and DM degrees from the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research in Chandigarh, India, before emigrating to the US almost 30 years ago. “In India, acute kidney injury was much more frequent than chronic kidney disease. This forced me to start looking into this disease,” he says, recalling the beginning of his career. “When I came to the US, I was intrigued by the new therapies in continuous dialysis. Over the years my interest in AKI continued.” As a member of the PICARD group his research has focused on the epidemiology of AKI in an intensive-care-unit (ICU) setting, and his contributions have led to the development of AKIN diagnostic and staging criteria for AKI and the development of guidelines for AKI management. “More recently, we initiated an international registry involving 15 centers from India, China, Europe, South America, the US and Canada, all contributing epidemiological information on AKI in ICU patients,” says Mehta. Data are already available on the participating centers and will help guide the design of new trials.

Kidney care in India is still close to Mehta’s heart. “Last year I was fortunate enough to go to India as an ISN ambassador,” he says. “As part of that program we convened a forum of Indian nephrologists who were interested in AKI. We left the symposium with the understanding that AKI would be an area for future focus and that the registry would serve as one of the mechanisms to enable this.” In parallel, another initiative is being spearheaded by the ISN along with clinicians from the US and India. It was set up to improve the delivery of renal care and boost renal research in India.

Mehta is also Chair of the ISN Committee on Acute Kidney Injury which, in one of its main projects, seeks to raise awareness of AKI.

Mehta is convinced of the importance of disseminating knowledge about AKI all along the line, addressing medical students and allied health personnel as well as physicians. His own research projects are directed toward novel approaches to understanding when to initiate dialysis in AKI. This is still one of the most controversial areas in the management of AKI, he says.