I’d like to start our Autumn newsletter with a massive thanks to our kidney community for your incredible support during Kidney Health Week. We had two big challenges during the week – we wanted to get more Australians to learn about kidney disease and check their risk, and we wanted to raise more funds to support our prevention and early detection work.

Your support helped us make good progress on both fronts. Sharing your own stories about the life changing impacts of kidney disease alongside our ‘Don’t be blind to kidney disease’ campaign, resonated with the community and persuaded over 10,000 people to take our online risk test to check if they were at risk of kidney disease and helped us raise over $50,000. A fantastic effort! Read more about Kidney Health Week further on.

We received very welcome news during this time with the Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, announcing a $3.7 million investment to support kidney health priorities outlined in our draft National Strategic Action Plan for Kidney Disease. The Government recognises that kidney disease is an urgent public health issue that needs to be addressed through better prevention, early detection and support for patients living with the burden of the disease. We look forward to working with the Government and wider kidney community to implement these actions.

Melbourne was fortunate to host the annual World Congress of Nephrology which coincided with Kidney Health Week. The conference was a great opportunity for Kidney Health Australia to forge stronger relationships with the international nephrology community, and support ongoing developments in kidney disease treatments and research.

During the conference, the International Society of Nephrology released its second Global Kidney Health Atlas. The Atlas studies the burden of kidney disease globally and predicts that by 2030, 14.5 million people world-wide will be living with end-stage kidney disease. This is an alarming statistic and highlights the urgency of our prevention and early detection work. So, while Kidney Health Week might be over for another year, our awareness raising activities continue at an ever increasing pace.

Thanks,

Chris Forbes
Kidney Health Australia CEO

The Big Red Kidney Bus is a free mobile dialysis service. To book or find out more visit kidney.org.au/bus
This year was a great success for Kidney Health Week in terms of raised awareness and community participation. We amplified our message around the risks of kidney disease and the need for early detection, and people heard it, with over 10,000 completing the Kidney Risk Test. Eighty-six percent of people who took the test were identified as ‘at risk’ of kidney disease and we will now encourage them to visit their GP for a kidney health check.

We also asked our community to share their stories and ask for more funding for vital research into early detection, and again, the response was amazing. Thank you to the 73 people who signed up to fundraise and have bravely shared their life-changing stories of being diagnosed with chronic kidney disease. So far they have united to raise over $22,000.

Special thanks to our four patient ambassadors—Sheree, Troy, Alice and Grace—whose stories were centrepiece of the campaign and resonated enormously with our community, resulting in shared awareness across our social platforms and boosting our fundraising efforts. And thank you to our whole community for taking part in the week and helping us spread the word about the importance of kidney health.

Our key message of losing 90% of kidney function without any symptoms was heard far and wide, with extensive media coverage across all states and territories, with special help from some celebrity supporters who have been touched by the disease.

You may have heard Jack Thompson on the radio promoting Kidney Health Week. Jack has suffered kidney failure and is now on dialysis. Current Dancing with the Stars judge, Sharna Burgess also supported us this year, and was interviewed on Studio 10 and posted on her social channels to highlight the
KIDNEY HEALTH WEEK

importance of early detection and taking care of our kidneys. Her father suffers from kidney disease so she has a close connection to our cause.

Our Indigenous community was well supported this year with Alice sharing her story in the Koori Mail, the Adelaide Advertiser and on regional radio channels.

We also had Maurice in Brisbane sharing his story on NITV and Indigenous radio. And our long-standing Ambassador, Rochelle Pitt, was interviewed on a new Indigenous program called Jam PAKT, which has been broadcast across 260 Indigenous channels.

This year we also held a free public event at Queensbridge Square in Melbourne where thousands of people had the opportunity to learn about kidney health; take a tour of our Big Red Kidney Bus; check their blood pressure, BMI and do our online Kidney Risk Test at the Priceline Pharmacy health hub; sign up to be an organ donor with Donate Life; and watch the compelling documentary, ‘Dying to Live’ on a large outdoor screen.

Billy the Kidney was also there to entertain the children and there were #iKidneyCheck eye masks galore. It was a delight to share the day with the team from World Kidney Day, who flew from Belgium to take part in our event and the Congress.

Thanks to the support from Boehringer, we were able to provide a GP specific Kidney Health Week pack to more than 1,200 clinics around the country in CKD hotspot territories, which included the new Fact Sheet about Diabetes Hypertension and CKD.

As we wrap up this year’s Kidney Health Week, we wish to thank you for your fantastic support and participation and look forward to building on the increased momentum around kidney disease awareness. Right now, there are 1.5 million people who are unaware that they’re living with early signs of kidney disease. Changing this number is no small feat. But if we work together, we can stop kidney disease from being a silent killer.

Our Top Fundraiser

This Kidney Health Week our community shared their personal stories of kidney disease to help boost much needed funding for research. Our top fundraiser was a mother and daughter, whose story touched everyone’s hearts and highlighted how this disease can affect anyone at any age.

Amanda’s daughter was 11 years old when she was diagnosed with renal failure. The diagnosis devastated Amanda and her daughter endured a year of dialysis until a kidney transplant gave her a chance at a more normal life.

“When I was told that my daughter had lost 90% of her kidney function, I was devastated. She had no symptoms until 6 weeks before she was diagnosed with renal failure. Fortunately I was a suitable donor and my daughter had a kidney transplant 9 months ago. She felt better immediately. But we know the transplant is a treatment, not a cure.”

Amanda and her daughter raised an amazing $6,910, surpassing their $5,000 goal, and contributing to our overall fundraising total of over $50,000.
It’s fantastic that you are proactive about your health and see your local health clinic regularly.

So many people don’t do this, they wait until they have symptoms and then go to see the doctor. For many conditions this is fine. But for kidney disease, we know that you can lose up to 90% of your kidney function without having any symptoms. Even with advanced kidney failure, the only symptom may be feeling slightly off-colour or tired. So if you want to be proactive about your kidney health you should be going in and seeing your local health clinic or GP regularly.

Sometimes the kidney check-up is overlooked in general health check-ups. That’s why we need to educate the community about kidney disease, so they can advocate for their own kidney health.

It’s really important to know if you have risk factors for kidney disease. Take our kidney risk test to find out.

Kidney.org.au/kidneyrisktest

Got a Question? Contact our Kidney Helpline via email: kidneyhelpline@kidney.org.au or call 1800 454 363

A recent study conducted by the George Institute, in collaboration with the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Services, the Queensland Government and the University of Queensland found that carers of people with kidney disease experienced a decline in wellbeing. This research comes at an opportune time as it strengthens our National Strategic Action Plan for Kidney Disease submission which sets out actions to improve support for carers, including recognition under the Government’s carers allowance, and providing more health and wellbeing and peer-to-peer support services for patients, carers and their families.

Read the study via the American Journal of Kidney Disease www.ajkd.org/article/S0272-6386(18)31011-4/pdf
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

A Practice Nurse can play a key role in identifying patients who are at risk of CKD and completing a Kidney Health Check to either identify or exclude a CKD diagnosis.

Health professionals should consider recommending individuals with risk factors for CKD to have an annual Kidney Health Check, especially if they have diabetes or hypertension or a check every two years if they exhibit any of the other risk factors.

As there are different types of urine tests, as part of the Kidney Health Check make sure a Urine Albumin/Creatinine Ratio (ACR) test is carried out.

RESOURCES

If you are living with or at risk of CKD, we have resources and information available online at www.kidney.org.au/resources-library

Here you can request our free handbook CKD Management in General Practice and/or download our CKD Go! App www.kidney.org.au/health-professionals

This a great time to focus on CKD in your practice or run some activities with your team. If you are looking for ideas and promotional material, contact our Kidney Health Australia Education team at primarycare@kidney.org.au or phone 1800 454 363 who can help!

GET INVOLVED

Kidney Health Week, our major annual awareness campaign.

Share your story either on social media or by becoming a fundraiser, and join our growing Kidney Army, where together we can boost awareness around kidney disease, and create a strong, connected community.
DUBBO MORNING TEA

The Big Red Kidney Bus stops by Dubbo for the first time.

Imagine never being able to go on holiday, or visit family and friends outside of your hometown. This is the reality for those who need dialysis on average five hours a day at least three times a week to survive. The Big Red Kidney Bus offers people on dialysis the chance to enjoy a much-needed break, whilst still providing this essential service.

For the past few weeks, The Big Red Kidney Bus has placed itself at a popular local holiday park called Discovery Parks in Dubbo to give those who need regular dialysis treatment the chance to enjoy a holiday and visit family and friends.

Dubbo’s location was chosen after talking to dialysis patients who agreed it was the best spot for everyone, especially indigenous patients who holiday here and visit family before going back home.

A special morning tea was held at Discovery Park to help kick off Kidney Health Week and was attended by 20 people including a few of our holidaymakers, nurses and nephrologists from Western NSW Local Health District, Deputy Mayor Cr Anne Marie Jones OAM, Ling Wei (BRKB Nurse unit Manager) and Yvonne Shen (BRKB Medical Director), both from Royal North Shore Hospital.

BIG RED KIDNEY BUS ALLOWS BRIONY TO HOLIDAY AGAIN

For people on dialysis, travel and holidays away can be too difficult without easy access to dialysis treatment. For beach loving Briony, her kidney disease diagnosis and dialysis treatment meant the holidays she used to love with her girls were a thing of the past. Thanks to the Big Red Kidney Bus, Briony can now make holidays with her family part of her future.

“I didn’t know I had a kidney health issue before I was diagnosed. I was already living with diabetes so I knew kidney issues could be in my future but you never expect it to happen to you. I’ve been on dialysis for the last three years which means I haven’t been able to travel with my kids during school holidays. I used to love going to the beach with my girls and now it’s an effort; my whole life has changed. You can’t go away because you’re stuck to the chair. The Big Red Kidney Bus has made taking a holiday an option again.

My first trip away was to Coffs Harbour where we did everything from relaxing by the beach to seeing the Big Banana. I’ve also been able to visit Caloundra which is close to my home and more recently, the bus has allowed me to visit family and friends in Dubbo without worrying about missing a dialysis treatment. When I’m in Dubbo, I’ll feel the best I’ve felt in a long time; my head is clear and I feel relaxed. If it wasn’t for the Bus, I wouldn’t be able to spend time away with my kids, being able to take a holiday like everyone else means everything to me.”

Yvonne Shen, BRKB Medical Director from Royal North Shore Hospital being interview by Prime 7.

View VIC and NSW locations of the Big Red Kidney Bus at kidney.org.au/bus
This year for Kidney Health Week we wanted to open everyone’s eyes to kidney disease, and to understand the impact of the disease on those affected. So we asked our community to share their heartfelt stories. For Evan, he discovered he had kidney disease just before Kidney Health Week. This is his story.

"Last Saturday I was in New York City on holidays with my family, when suddenly the vision in my left eye went all blurry. I was unsure about what had caused it, but figured it was a result of the American diet I was on for the past few weeks and thought it would clear up in a couple days.

As the days progressed I started getting strong headaches and feeling rather unwell like I was really hungover everyday without drinking alcohol.

The doctor explained that my urine contained a lot of protein in it and after the blood test came back from pathology, they were concerned that my kidney function was down to 14%.

I’m 33 years old and pretty overwhelmed with emotion how quickly this has all happened. Last week I was on holidays without a worry in the world and today I find out my life is about to change. It’s my son’s fourth birthday tomorrow morning and I’m scared about my future and if I’m going to be there for him in the future as a great Dad.

I was aware I had high blood pressure but was unaware of the dangers it could have on my body and never really knew about kidney disease before today. If I was more aware earlier of how serious hypertension is on my body, I could have taken steps to lower my blood pressure and avoid the damage that is done.

I don’t know the full extent of what challenges I am going to face in the future with the prospect of dialysis and transplant happening, but I will just have to be brave and face each day after the other. I hope I can be around for my family for many years and see my son grow into a man.”

Read Evan’s full story at kidneyhealthweek.kidney.org.au/evangooves

Read, share and donate today at kidneyhealthweek.kidney.org.au
#iKidneyCheck

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