New Study Finds Organs From Older Adults Can Function for Years After Transplantation

A new study in the Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology found that kidneys from donors 80 and older can function for years after transplantation.

Older donor age is a common reason for refusing a kidney for transplantation, but the donor organ shortage has led to recent efforts to find ways to include older, deceased donor kidneys. To see how donor age affects the long-term functioning of transplanted kidneys, researchers analyzed information on deceased donor kidney transplants performed at the Turin University Renal Transplant Center from 2003-2013. They identified a total of 647 transplants from “extended criteria” donors, which were defined as all donors older than 60 and those ages 50 to 59 with certain risk factors.

After a median follow-up of 4.9 years, patient and kidney survival were comparable among age groups (50 to 59 years, 60 to 69 years, 70 to 79 years, and ≥80 years). The 5-year patient survival rates ranged from 87.8% to 90.1%, and the 5-year kidney survival rates ranged from 65.9% to 75.2%. Rates of kidney discard before transplantation were similar for kidneys from donors ages 50 to 79 years, but the discard rate was higher among kidneys from octogenarian donors.

Increase in Alcohol Use Among Baby Boomers Raises Concerns

Alcohol is the most commonly used psychoactive substance among older adults, and this group can have unique risks associated with alcohol consumption compared to younger individuals.

To address the lack of research on this topic, researchers examined data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2005-2014). Trends of self-reported, past-month binge alcohol use and alcohol use disorder were examined among adults 50 and older.

Researchers found significant increases in past-year alcohol use,
past-month alcohol use, past-month binge drinking, and alcohol use disorders. Results also suggest that although men had a higher prevalence of binge alcohol use and alcohol use disorders than women, binge alcohol use and alcohol use disorder increased among women in this nationally representative sample.

The results raise public health concerns, given the significant increases in binge alcohol use among older adults who reported fair/poor health and/or multiple chronic conditions.


Older Adults With Cataracts More Likely to Have Depression Symptoms

Older adults with cataracts are more likely to have symptoms of depression, according to a new study in Optometry and Vision Science.

As part of a community survey study, approximately 4,600 older adults in one Chinese town completed a depression questionnaire. Participants also underwent a clinical eye examination to rate the presence and severity of cataracts.

Excluding those with previous cataract surgery, approximately one half (49%) of participants had cataracts in at least one eye and 8% of participants had depressive symptoms.

Older adults with cataracts were more likely to have depressive symptoms, independent of socioeconomic status, lifestyle factors, and visual acuity. On adjusted analysis, symptoms of depression were 33% more likely when cataracts were present. Odds of depressive symptoms were similar for participants with cataracts in one eye versus both eyes.

The association between cataracts and depression was even stronger for those with no formal education (50% increase). After all other factors were taken into account, cataracts explained 14% of the variation in depression risk.

The researchers note that the study cannot show the direction of the association. Vision loss may cause older adults to become isolated and withdrawn, or depression may make them less likely to seek treatment for cataracts.


Individuals With Protein in Urine More Likely to Develop Thinking and Memory Problems or Dementia

Individuals who have protein in their urine, which is a sign of kidney problems, may also be more likely to later develop problems with thinking and memory skills or dementia, according to a new meta-analysis in Neurology.

Researchers looked at all available studies on kidney problems and the development of cognitive impairment or dementia. A total of 22 studies on the topic were included in the systematic review. Five studies, including 27,825 participants, were evaluated. The analysis showed that individuals with protein in the urine were 35% more likely to develop cognitive impairment or dementia than those who did not have protein in their urine.

For another marker of kidney function (i.e., estimated glomerular filtration rate), the results were mixed and did not show an association. For three other markers of kidney function (i.e., cystatin C, serum creatinine, and creatinine clearance), no meta-analysis could be completed because the few studies available did not use the same methods and could not be compared.