

Drug used to slow kidney disease found to be ineffective

Australian and New Zealand researchers have found a drug used to slow kidney disease in up to 20 per cent of patients is ineffective.

The Australasian Kidney Trials Network led a large, two-year study, known as CKD-FIX, to assess the effectiveness of the drug, allopurinol, in slowing the rate of decline in kidney function. The results from the study were published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, one of the world's leading medical journals [here](#).



Doctors have used the gout medication also to treat kidney disease for nearly 20 years, but with little robust evidence to demonstrate its benefit, according to CKD-FIX Chief Investigator, Professor David Johnson, who is the Medical Director-Queensland Renal Transplant Service, Princess Alexandra Hospital; Professor of Medicine and Professor of Population Health, The University of Queensland (UQ); and Director, UQ Centre for Kidney Disease Research based at the Translational Research Institute.

Professor David Johnson

“In the CKD-FIX study, we compared the use of allopurinol to a placebo and found, to our surprise, that it made no difference to the rate of kidney function decline,” he said.

“Based on these results we believe there is no benefit in prescribing this medication, unless there is an additional specific medical reason, such as gout. This much awaited, high-quality evidence will inform clinical guidelines for patient treatment internationally.”

Professor Johnson cautioned patients with kidney disease who were already taking a medication like allopurinol to lower blood uric acid levels should not abruptly stop this treatment, but instead discuss their kidney care management with their doctor first.

CKD-FIX Lead Investigator-New Zealand, Dr Janak de Zoysa from the University of Auckland and Waitemata District Health Board said trials like CKD-FIX were very important as they allowed doctors to optimise clinical practice.



Dr Janak de Zoysa

Commercially available since the late 1960s, allopurinol helps the body reduce uric acid. High levels of the chemical are common among patients with chronic kidney disease, where it is associated with a higher risk of developing chronic kidney disease and its progression.

CKD-FIX Study Co-lead, The George Institute for Global Health Senior Research Fellow and St George Hospital, Sydney nephrologist, Associate Professor Sunil Badve said the widely held view that elevated blood uric acid levels were responsible for rapid decline of kidney function was probably wrong.



“Based on our study results, it appears that elevated blood uric acid levels are most likely an indicator of reduced kidney function rather than a cause of reduced kidney function,” said A/Prof Badve.

Associate Professor Sunil Badve

The CKD-FIX study ran across 31 hospitals in Australia and New Zealand, with 369 patients –with stage 3 or 4 chronic kidney disease who were at increased risk of further progression – taking part in the trial.

The CKD-FIX study was sponsored by The University of Queensland and funded through research grants from the National Medical and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Health Research Council (HRC) of New Zealand. The [Australasian Kidney Trials Network](#) collaborative research group engages the kidney care community to identify, conduct and support clinical trials focussed on improving appropriate patient-centred outcomes.

Listen to the Lead Investigators discuss the trial results [here](#)

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