



Special Session of the Executive Board on the implementation of resolution WHA73.1 COVID-19 response

STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF NEPHROLOGY ON ITEM 3 OF THE AGENDA

Honorable chair, distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the International Society of Nephrology (ISN), we welcome resolution WHA 73.1 on the COVID-19 response. In particular, we support its call for member states “to ensure the continued functioning of the health system in all relevant aspects” and recognition that this must include “the uninterrupted and safe provision of population- and individual-level services” for noncommunicable diseases like kidney disease.

The ISN urges the WHO Executive Board and its Member States to recognize the impact of COVID-19 on patients with acute or permanent kidney failure, many of whom face interruption or unavailability of life-saving treatments such as dialysis and transplant.

Preliminary data show that about 20-30% of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 develop kidney failure, leading to a surge in requirement for dialysis in the short term and long term. The increased demand of limited resources severely compromises treatments of this acute, potentially reversible complication of COVID-19. Further, the breakdown of health systems and disruptions due to lockdowns have had a severe impact on the ability of patients with advanced kidney disease to access regular dialysis, and to receive life altering kidney transplants. Even a brief interruption in chronic dialysis treatment is a death sentence, as is lack of access to kidney transplants for some.

Hence, we call upon Member States of the WHO to:

- Ensure a timely treatment of acute and chronic kidney disease including access to essential medications, dialysis equipment and supplies, and safe transplantation.
- Ensure availability of adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect the healthcare workers by overseeing their purchase, distribution, supply, and responsible use, and ensure rapid scaling-up of SARS-CoV2 testing capabilities.
- Ensure that patients with NCDs, who by being affected by severe co-morbidities including diabetes, malignancies and respiratory, cardiovascular, liver, and kidney diseases commonly experience worse outcomes, are protected and treated from the consequences of COVID-19 disease.