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Advances in the Pathogenesis and Management of Chronic Kidney Disease

Salio Badura*

Department of Nephrology and Dialysis, San Salvatore Hospital, Via Vetoio, L'Aquila, Italy

***Corresponding author:** Salio Badura, Department of Nephrology and Dialysis, San Salvatore Hospital, Via Vetoio, L'Aquila, Italy; E-mail: badura.salio@salvatore.it

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Introduction

The Chronic kidney disease (CKD) represents a major global health burden, affecting an estimated 10–15% of the adult population and contributing substantially to morbidity, mortality and healthcare costs. Characterized by a progressive decline in renal function, CKD is driven by complex and overlapping mechanisms, including hemodynamic alterations, metabolic dysregulation, oxidative stress, inflammation and fibrotic remodeling of renal tissue. The heterogeneity of its etiologies ranging from diabetes mellitus and hypertension to glomerulonephritis and genetic disorders underscores the need for nuanced understanding of its pathogenesis. Over the past decade, advances in molecular biology, systems medicine and precision diagnostics have shed light on pathways such as the renin angiotensin aldosterone system (RAAS), podocyte injury, mitochondrial dysfunction and maladaptive immune responses that fuel renal injury and accelerate disease progression. Despite these encouraging advances, challenges persist in the early detection of CKD, equitable access to care and the translation of research breakthroughs into routine practice. The silent nature of early-stage disease often delays diagnosis, while disparities in resources and awareness impede optimal management, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Future efforts must integrate cutting-edge science with pragmatic approaches to screening, prevention and patient-centered therapy, aiming to reduce the global burden of CKD and its associated complications [1].

Description

The pathogenesis of chronic kidney disease (CKD) is multifactorial, involving an intricate interplay between hemodynamic, metabolic, inflammatory and fibrotic processes. Central to disease progression is the maladaptive response of nephrons to injury, characterized by glomerular hyperfiltration, podocyte stress and tubular hypertrophy. Over time, these compensatory changes increase intraglomerular pressure, leading to sclerosis and nephron dropout. Metabolic insults, including hyperglycemia, dyslipidemia and uric acid accumulation, further aggravate oxidative stress and mitochondrial dysfunction within renal cells. Proinflammatory cytokines and chemokines recruit immune cells to the kidney, amplifying tissue injury and initiating pathways that culminate in extracellular matrix deposition and interstitial fibrosis. Genetic susceptibility, such as APOL1 variants in certain populations, adds further complexity to disease initiation and progression. Collectively, these mechanisms underscore CKD as not merely a consequence of primary renal disorders but a dynamic syndrome integrating systemic and local factors that sustain renal injury [2].

Progress in diagnostic technology has transformed how clinicians identify and monitor CKD. Traditional tools, such as serum creatinine and estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR), remain essential but have limitations in detecting early disease or subtle changes in renal function. The introduction of novel biomarkers, including cystatin C, Neutrophil Gelatinase-Associated Lipocalin (NGAL) and kidney injury molecule-1 (KIM-1), has enhanced sensitivity in recognizing subclinical injury. Multiplex proteomic and metabolomic analyses now enable detailed profiling of pathways implicated in renal dysfunction, offering opportunities for individualized risk prediction. Imaging innovations, such as diffusion-weighted magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), ultrasonography with elastography and positron emission tomography (PET) tracers targeting fibrosis or inflammation, provide non-invasive windows into structural and functional changes. In addition, point-of-care testing and home-based monitoring are improving accessibility, particularly in resource-constrained settings. These developments promise earlier detection and more precise surveillance, supporting timely therapeutic interventions to prevent irreversible nephron loss [3].

The therapeutic landscape of CKD has expanded significantly, moving beyond symptomatic management toward interventions targeting the molecular drivers of renal decline. RAAS blockade with angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors (ACEIs) and angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs) remains a cornerstone, but novel agents have emerged to complement traditional therapy. Sodium–glucose cotransporter 2 (SGLT2) inhibitors, initially developed for diabetes, have shown robust renoprotective effects in diabetic and non-diabetic populations, reducing albuminuria and slowing eGFR decline [4].

Nonsteroidal mineralocorticoid receptor antagonists, such as finerenone, mitigate inflammation and fibrosis, offering benefits even in patients with preserved ejection fraction heart failure. Intensive control of blood pressure and glycemia, dietary sodium and protein optimization and correction of metabolic acidosis remain critical elements of care. Experimental therapies targeting transforming growth factor-β (TGF-β), endothelin receptors and inflammasomes are under active investigation, aiming to halt or reverse renal fibrosis. Regenerative approaches, including stem cell–derived extracellular vesicles and tissue engineering, provide a glimpse into future curative strategies. Multidisciplinary care, encompassing dietitians, social workers and mental health professionals, enhances adherence and quality of life, ensuring that interventions address both clinical outcomes and patient well-being. Future directions also involve personalized medicine, leveraging genomic, transcriptomic and metabolomic data to tailor interventions to individual disease biology. Continued collaboration between basic scientists, clinicians and public health experts will be essential to translate research advances into equitable outcomes, ultimately curbing the global burden of CKD and its complications [5].

Conclusion

Chronic kidney disease remains a complex and progressive disorder, arising from interplay of hemodynamic, metabolic, inflammatory and fibrotic pathways. In recent years, remarkable advances in understanding its molecular and cellular mechanisms have reshaped how clinicians conceptualize and approach the disease. Early identification of at-risk individuals, refined diagnostic tools and the integration of precision biomarkers are enabling timely interventions and individualized management. Novel therapeutics ranging from SGLT2 inhibitors and nonsteroidal mineralocorticoid receptor antagonists to investigational anti-fibrotic and regenerative therapies have expanded treatment horizons, offering hope for slowing or even reversing renal decline.However, the silent onset of CKD and disparities in access to quality care continue to limit progress, particularly in resource-limited regions.

Acknowledgment

None.

Conflict of Interest

None.

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