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## Care standardized for Albertans with chronic kidney disease

CALGARY – Albertans living with chronic kidney disease (CKD) are receiving improved diagnosis and treatment following the launch last month of a standardized care pathway.

Developed by Alberta researchers, the CKD Clinical Pathway provides community physicians, pharmacists and nurses an online resource that can be used to shape care plans for the one-in-10 Alberta adults with chronic kidney disease.

“There is currently a wide variation in how patients with chronic kidney disease are identified and treated,” says Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn, Department Head of Nephrology for Alberta Health Services (AHS) Calgary Zone.

“This tool improves access for patients by assisting primary care providers to manage patients with chronic kidney disease in the community, as well as helping to identify patients with more serious kidney disease and ensure they have timely access to a specialist.

“Clinical pathways like this one help standardize practice and ensure all patients in Alberta receive the highest quality guideline-recommended care,” adds Dr. Hemmelgarn, also Department Head of Community Health Sciences at the University of Calgary and member of the Cumming School of Medicine’s O’Brien Institute for Public Health, and Libin Cardiovascular Institute of Alberta.

Chronic kidney disease is a potentially fatal condition that can lead to a progressive loss of renal (kidney) function over time, resulting in a variety of health complications. Patients with high blood pressure, diabetes or a family history of kidney disease are at risk. The pathway guides clinicians in testing and identifying patients with chronic kidney disease, managing the condition through lifestyle and medication and, in some cases, referring patients to specialists.

“Identifying and treating patients with chronic kidney disease can be a complex process, especially for clinicians who may not have a lot of experience with the condition,” says Calgary family physician Dr. Kerry McBrien, who is also a member of the O’Brien Institute for Public Health. “This tool provides clinicians with accessible information on diagnosis, testing, management and referral in a format that is simple to navigate and interpret.”

Linda Marchuk was recently diagnosed with diabetes and says she is glad her family physician had resources easily available to help manage her condition.

“Diabetes puts me at risk for developing kidney disease. It’s a relief to know that I can be closely monitored by my family doctor about my risk factors,” says the 64-year-old Calgary woman.

“I would encourage patients to speak with their family physician about their risk factors for chronic kidney disease.”

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The chronic kidney disease pathway was developed by the Interdisciplinary Chronic Disease Collaboration ([www.ICDC.ca](http://www.ICDC.ca)), a team of Alberta-based researchers, primary care physicians, pharmacists, nurses and nephrologists, and is aimed at improving the health of patients with non-communicable chronic diseases. The pathway is based on best practice and evidence recommendations from a number of sources, including the Canadian Cardiovascular Society, the Canadian Diabetes Association and the Canadian Society of Nephrology.

Clinicians can visit [www.ckdpathway.ca](http://www.ckdpathway.ca) for more information.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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