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Current Burden and Policy of Renal Replacement Therapy in Korea

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The Korean Society of Nephrology (KSN) has maintained a nationwide end-stage renal disease (ESRD) registry data from Korean Renal Data System (KORDS) since 1985, as the representative registry of ESRD patients in Korea. This topic is aimed to provide the current Burden of domestic ESRD and the policy of dialysis therapy on the base of the data from KORDS.

The KORDS Committee of KSN has collected data on dialysis centers and patients through an online registry program, and the data from 1986 to 2022 were analyzed.

The incidence and prevalence of ESRD patients in Korea are increasing. The ESRD population numbered more than 100,000 in 2022, doubling during the 10 years since 2010. The proportion of diabetes mellitus as a major cause of ESRD seems to have reached a plateau. The increasing number of elderly dialysis patients is a constant trend, with more than half for the proportion of patients older than 65 years old in 2022. All-cause mortality decreased for the last approximately 20 years, regardless of sex, age, and cause of ESRD. The 5-year patient survival rate in both hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis increased from 2001 to 2013. Since 2013, the patient survival rates in peritoneal dialysis were similar to those in hemodialysis. Cardiovascular complications were the leading cause of death in ESRD patients.

The incidence and prevalence of Korean ESRD patients have increased over time, although patient survival has also steadily increased. The establishment of a surveillance method to address the major cause of mortality in ESRD patients will help improve outcomes.