

# Up to 40,000 kidney deaths a year caused by poor care

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Health Reporter

UP TO 40,000 patients a year could be dying needlessly in hospital from kidney failure linked to dehydration, according to NHS research.

A study found that between 15,000 and 40,000 unnecessary deaths due to acute kidney injury are occurring on wards every year. Acute kidney injury (AKI) describes the sudden shutdown of the kidneys. If detected early enough, it can be treated by giving patients extra fluids or putting them on a dialysis machine.

It is particularly common in the elderly and can affect patients with heart disease, diabetes and infections.

But it is rarely recorded on death certificates, because often doctors and nurses don't realise that their patients have been suffering from the condition.

Only last August the NHS watchdog NICE was forced to issue guidelines to doctors and nurses on how to detect and treat it - amid concerns that symptoms were being missed. Now research commissioned by the NHS's Improving Quality body - which aims to improve care standards - has found the condition is five times more prevalent than previously thought.

Professor Donal O'Donoghue, consultant renal physician at Salford Royal NHS

## 'This is completely unacceptable'

Foundation Trust, said: 'We know at least a thousand people a month are dying in hospital from AKI due to poor care.

'These deaths are avoidable. This is completely unacceptable and we can't allow it to continue. Good basic care would save these lives and save millions of pounds for the NHS.'

He added: 'Doctors and nurses need to make elementary checks to prevent AKI. In general, people who are having surgery shouldn't be asked to go without water for longer than two hours.

'Sometimes that is unavoidable but then medical staff need to check their patients are not becoming dehydrated. They also need to be aware that some common medications increase the risk of AKI.'

And Marion Kerr, health economist at Insight Health Economics, said: 'AKI costs the NHS more than £1 billion every year. That's more than we spend on breast, lung and bowel cancer combined.

'Every day more than 30 people are dying needlessly. Compare that to MRSA which was killing about four people a day at its peak. Simple improvements in basic care could save the NHS £200 million pounds a year and, more importantly, could save thousands of lives.'