

ACCESS TO EXPENSIVE THERAPIES IN NEPHROLOGY IN SWITZERLAND

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Nephrologists have been advocates for equitable access to care and confronting scarcity of resources since the 1950s and 1960s when transplantation and chronic dialysis became a possibility. Medical progress is advancing rapidly and promising new therapies are emerging for patients with kidney disease, which may protect kidney function. However, many new medications are expensive and not accessible to all patients. Nephrologists must therefore again take the lead in advocating for fairer access to these new expensive therapies.

Clinicians in Switzerland wishing to prescribe an expensive therapy must obtain approval from the health insurance prior to use. These applications take time and often involve multiple rounds of back and forth before a therapy is approved or denied. Such delays may make a patient lose valuable time and kidney function. When an expensive medication is denied, the patient may choose to pay out of pocket, or can appeal legally, but the costs of both are often prohibitive. In addition, decisions by health insurers are not transparent, may not be the same between 2 patients with similar diseases, may differ between health insurances and therefore it is likely that access to these expensive medicines may be unequal among patients with similar needs.

Many questions remain regarding access to these expensive therapies in nephrology in Switzerland: How often are such medications required? How often are they obtained or denied? If they are obtained, what are the costs? Who pays? Do all patients have the same chance at receiving the therapy? Are these therapies used and monitored appropriately to establish benefit if still relatively new? How fair are the prices for these medications? How fair is the situation in Switzerland compared with other countries in Europe?

This proposal aims to understand the current situation regarding the need, use and access to expensive medicines for patients with kidney disease, and to understand barriers to access and current oversight processes. The goal is to develop a framework for advocacy regarding access to expensive therapies in nephrology, to initiate debate around fair profits and fair pricing and the necessity to ensure clinical needs of all patients are met fairly.