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Gender disparity in kidney transplantation in Korea

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Chronic kidney disease (CKD) shows gender differences in prevalence and rate of progression. As for kidney transplantation (KT), women are less likely to be kidney recipients but are more likely to become living kidney donors in general. Recently, the Asian Society of Transplantation in partnership with the Women in Transplantation highlighted the disparity between male and female KT donors and recipients in the Asia Pacific region. Social factors such as attitude, financial considerations, patriarchy, and coercion were known to attribute as the key contributors to the disparity. Since the success of the first kidney transplant in 1969, Korea has made remarkable progress, reaching the world level in terms of quantity and quality, as well as the number and survival rates of transplants. Furthermore, the socioeconomic status of women in Korea is generally improving. According to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Korean women took a larger role in economic activities and attained great strides in educational attainment. However, there has not been much attention to gender disparity in the field of CKD and transplantation in Korea. So, this study aimed to describe the gender disparity in dialysis, waiting list, and KT in Korea. Data for incident dialysis, newly registered waiting list, and donors and recipients were retrospectively collected between January 2000 and December 2020 from the Korean Society of Nephrology end-stage renal disease registry and from the database of the Korean Network for Organ Sharing. The data regarding the proportion of females on dialysis, on the waiting list, and kidney transplantation donors or recipients over 20 years were analyzed using linear regression analysis. The average proportion of females on dialysis over the past 20 years was 40.5%. The proportion of females on dialysis was 42.8% in 2000, and decreased to 38.2% in 2020, showing a decreasing trend. The average proportion of women on the waiting list was 38.4%, which was lower than that for dialysis. The average proportion of female recipients in living donor kidney transplantation and female living donors were 40.1% and 53.2%, respectively. The overall proportion of female donors in living donor kidney transplantation showed an increasing trend. However, the proportion of female recipients in living donor kidney transplantation showed no trend. This study showed that gender disparity exists and further studies are needed to identify biological and socioeconomic factors to resolve gender inequality.