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# Core Concepts in Acute Kidney Injury

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Sushrut S. Waikar • Patrick T. Murray  
Ajay K. Singh  
Editors

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 Springer

*Editors*

Sushrut S. Waikar  
Renal Division  
Brigham and Women's Hospital  
Harvard Medical School  
Boston, MA  
USA

Patrick T. Murray  
University College Dublin  
Dublin  
Ireland

Ajay K. Singh  
Renal Division  
Brigham and Women's Hospital  
Harvard Medical School  
Boston, MA  
USA

ISBN 978-1-4939-8626-2      ISBN 978-1-4939-8628-6 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-8628-6>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018950405

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Printed on acid-free paper

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The registered company address is: 233 Spring Street, New York, NY 10013, U.S.A.

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## Preface

Acute kidney injury or AKI refers to an extremely heterogeneous group of clinical conditions that share common diagnostic features: a rise in the serum creatinine concentration and/or a decrease in urine output. These two elements that comprise the diagnostic criteria for AKI reflect major life-sustaining functions of the kidneys, which are to clear the blood of waste products and to regulate circulating plasma volume. A wide array of conditions can acutely injure or impair kidney function and result in a diagnosis of AKI, including tubular injury, tubulointerstitial nephritis, glomerulonephritis, and pre-renal azotemia (functional AKI).

AKI has a multitude of causes. Worldwide, the most common cause of AKI is pre-renal azotemia from diarrheal illnesses. Environmental exposures, toxins, and injuries are among the many environmental factors that can lead to AKI. Over the past 30 years, the advent of new technologies to diagnose and treat human disease has resulted in a whole new set of causes of AKI, such as cardiac surgery, immune checkpoint inhibitors, iodinated contrast media, and various nephrotoxic injuries.

Notions about the natural history of AKI date back to a seminal report by Swann and Merrill in 1953 that espoused sequential phases: initiation, maintenance, extension, and recovery. This description was based on cases of severe oligoanuric AKI in hospitalized individuals at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital who had conditions barely recognizable in today's modern hospitals, such as transfusion reactions (25%), distilled water irrigation or infusion (9%), and carbon tetrachloride toxicity (8%)—in addition to more recognizable entities such as postoperative hemorrhage (21%). AKI today frequently does not adhere to the idealized phases outlined by Swann and Merrill.

The importance of AKI as a public health issue in both the developed and developing world is indisputable. AKI is a major risk factor for prolonged length of stay, mortality, and subsequent cardiovascular disease and chronic kidney disease. AKI continues to evolve as our population ages, new environmental threats arise, and new drugs and procedures with nephrotoxic potential are developed. Along with this, basic and clinical investigation into AKI prevention and treatment continues. Although only a single drug has been FDA approved for the treatment or prevention of AKI (“Osmitol” or intravenous mannitol, approved on June 8, 1964), a number of novel targets and strategies are being investigated, with some promising signs.

In this textbook, we have invited leading clinicians, epidemiologists, basic scientists, and clinical trialists to provide an update on AKI. After reading their contributions, we hope you will share both their and our optimism and enthusiasm for a future in which AKI prevention and treatment will be yet another one of modern medicine's success stories.

Boston, MA, USA

Dublin, Ireland

Boston, MA, USA

Sushrut S. Waikar

Patrick T. Murray

Ajay K. Singh

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## Contributors

**Alian A. Al-balas, MD** Division of Nephrology, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL, USA

**Rashid Alobaidi, MD** Division of Critical Care, Department of Pediatrics, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, Canada

**Sean M. Bagshaw, MD, MSc** Department of Critical Care Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, Canada

**Justin M. Belcher, MD, PhD** Section of Nephrology, Department of Internal Medicine, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, CT, USA

**Frederic T. Billings IV, MD, MSc** Department of Anesthesiology, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, USA

**Joseph V. Bonventre** Renal Division and Engineering in Medicine Division, Department of Medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA

Division of Health Sciences and Technology, Harvard-Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, USA

Harvard Stem Cell Institute, Cambridge, MA, USA

**Steven L. Chang** Division of Urology, Department of Surgery, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA

**Paras Dedhia, MD** Division of Nephrology, Department of Internal Medicine, Kidney CARE Program, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH, USA

**Jeremy R. DeGrado, PharmD, BCPS** Pharmacy Department, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA, USA

**Luca Di Lullo, MD, PhD** Department of Nephrology and Dialysis, L. Parodi-Delfino Hospital, Colleferro, Italy

**Zoltan H. Endre, BMedSci, MBBS, PhD, FRACP, FASN** Department of Nephrology, Prince of Wales Hospital and Clinical School, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia

**Jairam R. Eswara** Division of Urology, Department of Surgery, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA



**David A. Ferenbach** Department of Renal Medicine, Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

MRC Centre of Inflammation Research, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

**Michael A. Ferguson, MD** Division of Nephrology, Department of Medicine, Boston Children's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA

**Steven Gabardi, PharmD** Department of Transplant Surgery, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA, USA

Department of Pharmacy Services/Renal Division, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA, USA

Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA

**James F. Gilmore, PharmD, BCPS** Department of Pharmacy Services, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA, USA

**Glenda C. Gobe, BSc, MSc, PhD, GradDipEd** School of Medicine, Centre for Kidney Disease Research, University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD, Australia

**Shruti Gupta, MD** Division of Renal Medicine, Department of Medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA, USA

**Benjamin Hohlfelder, PharmD** Department of Pharmacy Services, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA, USA

**Elizabeth A. K. Hunt, MD** Department of Pediatrics, Division of Pediatric Nephrology, University of Vermont Medical Center, Larner College of Medicine at UVM, Burlington, VT, USA

**Vivekanand Jha, MD DM FAMS FRCP(London and Edin)** George Institute for Global Health India, New Delhi, India

George Institute for Global Health, University of Oxford, UK

**Jay L. Koyner, MD** Section of Nephrology, Department of Medicine, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA

**Kelly V. Liang, MD** Renal-Electrolyte Division, Department of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

**Randy L. Luciano, MD, PhD** Section of Nephrology, Department of Internal Medicine, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, CT, USA

**Colm C. Magee, MD, MPH, FRCPI** Department of Nephrology, Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, Ireland

**Alain Meyrier, MD, PhD** Service de Néphrologie, Hôpital Georges Pompidou, Université Paris-Descartes Medical School, Paris, France

**José A. Morfin, MD** Division of Nephrology, Department of Internal Medicine, University of California Davis School of Medicine, Sacramento, CA, USA

**Patrick T. Murray, MD, FASN, FRCPI, FJFICMI** School of Medicine, University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

**Patrick Niaudet, MD** Department of Pediatric Nephrology, Hôpital Necker-Enfants Malades, Université Paris-Descartes, Paris, France

**Sagar U. Nigwekar, MD, MMSc** Department of Medicine/Nephrology, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA, USA

**Jason B. O'Neal, MD** Department of Anesthesiology, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Nashville, TN, USA

**Eoin D. O'Sullivan** Department of Renal Medicine, Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

MRC Centre of Inflammation Research, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

**Marlies Ostermann, PhD** Department of Nephrology and Critical Care Medicine, King's College London, Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation Hospital, London, UK

**Evan P. Owens, BS(Hons)** Centre for Kidney Disease Research, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD, Australia

**Paul M. Palevsky, MD** Renal Section, Medical Service, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

Renal-Electrolyte Division, Department of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

**Sreejith Parameswaran, MD, DM** Department of Nephrology, Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research, Pondicherry, India

**Chirag R. Parikh, MD, PhD** Section of Nephrology, Department of Internal Medicine, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, CT, USA

**Mark A. Perazella, MD, MS** Section of Nephrology, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, CT, USA

Department of Medicine, Yale University, New Haven, CT, USA

**Timothy J. Pianta, MBBS(Hons), FRACP, PhD** Northern Clinical School, University of Melbourne, Epping, VIC, Australia

**John R. Prowle, MA, MB, BChir, MSc, MD, FFICM** Critical Care and Perioperative Medicine Research Group, William Harvey Research Institute, Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London, London, UK

**Valary T. Raup** Division of Urology, Department of Surgery, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA

**Lynn Redahan, MB, BCh, BAO** School of Medicine, University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

**Claudio Ronco, MD, PhD** International Renal Research Institute, S. Bortolo Hospital, Vicenza, Italy

**Aparna Sharma, MD** Section of Nephrology, Department of Medicine, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA

**Andrew D. Shaw, MB, FRCA, FCCM, FFICM, MMHC** Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, Canada

**Craig A. Stevens, PharmD** Department of Pharmacy Services, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA, USA

**Charuhas V. Thakar, MD** Division of Nephrology, Department of Internal Medicine, Kidney CARE Program, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH, USA

**Ashita J. Tolwani, MD, MSc** Division of Nephrology, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL, USA

**Sushrut S. Waikar, MD, MPH** Division of Renal Medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA

**Steven D. Weisbord, MD, MSc** Renal-Electrolyte Division, Department of Medicine, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

Renal Section and Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

**Keith M. Wille, MD, MSPH** Division of Pulmonary, Allergy, and Critical Care Medicine, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL, USA