Acute kidney injury may be more deadly than heart attacks

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Acute kidney injury, a condition that is common but often asymptomatic, may be more deadly than a heart attack, according to a study appearing in an upcoming issue of the *Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology* (*CJASN*). The findings suggest that follow-up and surveillance may be critical to protect the health of individuals who develop this form of kidney damage.

Acute kidney injury (AKI) is an abrupt decline in kidney function that often arises after major surgeries or severe infections. Lakhmir Chawla, MD (George Washington University and Veteran Affairs Medical Center, Washington DC) and his colleagues sought to look at the seriousness of AKI by analyzing patient information in a VA database. Their analysis included 36,980 patients discharged with a diagnosis of AKI or heart attack (myocardial infarction, or MI) who were admitted to a VA facility between October 1999 and December 2005.

The researchers found that death occurred most often in patients who experienced both AKI and MI (57.5%), and least often in patients with uncomplicated admissions for MI (32.3%). Patients with AKI or AKI + MI later experienced more major heart and kidney problems than those with MI alone.

"The findings from this study will be critical for planning future interventional trials in patients with AKI," said Dr. Chawla. "Because AKI remains an ongoing and increasing public health hazard, more research into the treatment and management of this syndrome is critically required."

More information: The article, entitled "Association Between Acute Kidney Injury and Long-Term Renal and Cardiovascular Outcomes in US Veterans," will appear online at cjasn.asnjournals.org/ on December 5, 2013.

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