

Renalism

In a recent *CMAJ* article regarding nirmatrelvir–ritonavir for COVID-19, the statement that this treatment is contraindicated for people with an estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR) of less than 30 is inaccurate.¹ Patients with kidney disease are routinely excluded from phase 3 and other randomized controlled trials, given complicated and unknown dosing and competing outcomes. Renalism is the term used to describe the therapeutic nihilism that leads to patients with kidney disease waiting longer for effective interventions to reach them.^{2,3}

Drs. McDonald and Lee misstate the product monograph.⁴ Severe chronic kidney disease (i.e., GFR < 30) is not a contraindication for use of nirmatrelvir–ritonavir based on data; rather, a lack of data means it is not yet recommended. Based on pharmacokinetics and the absence of dose-dependent toxicity, many nephrologists are using nirmatrelvir–ritonavir in patients with chronic kidney disease (300 mg nirmatrelvir plus 100 mg ritonavir on day 1 and then 150 mg nirmatrelvir plus 100 mg ritonavir for the next 4 days).⁵ More careful language would help to minimize delayed access to this therapy for patients who are at high risk of COVID-19 and who have a high case fatality rate.

Swapnil Hiremath MD MPH

Nephrologist, Department of Medicine,
University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ont.

■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2022 August 2;194:E1040.
doi: 10.1503/cmaj.146430-l

References

1. McDonald EG, Lee TC. Nirmatrelvir-ritonavir for COVID-19. *CMAJ* 2022;194:E218.
2. Chertow GM, Normand S-LT, McNeil BJ. “Renalism”: inappropriately low rates of coronary angiography in elderly individuals with renal insufficiency. *J Am Soc Nephrol* 2004;15:2462-8.
3. Major R, Selvaskandan H, Makkeyah YM, et al. The exclusion of patients with CKD in prospectively registered interventional trials for COVID-19—a rapid review of international registry data. *J Am Soc Nephrol* 2020;31:2250-2.
4. *Product monograph including patient medication information: Paxlovid*. Kirkland (QC): Pfizer Canada ULC; 2022. Available: https://pdf.hres.ca/dpd_pm/00064313.PDF (accessed 2022 July 7).
5. Hiremath S, McGuinty M, Argyropoulos C, et al. Prescribing nirmatrelvir/ritonavir for COVID-19 in advanced CKD. *Clin J Am Soc Nephrol* 2022 Jun 9 [Epub ahead of print]. doi: 10.2215/CJN.05270522.

Competing interests: None declared.

Content licence: This is an Open Access article distributed in accordance with the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) licence, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided that the original publication is properly cited, the use is noncommercial (i.e., research or educational use) and no modifications or adaptations are made. See: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>