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Medication-taking Behaviors of People Managing Multiple Chronic Conditions and Kidney Disease: A Meta-Ethnographic Qualitative Synthesis

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Background: Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is associated with other multiple chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. Slowing disease progression requires patients to integrate daily medication taking into their daily routines, which is difficult. Behavioral interventions have focused on the outcome of medication adherence and have virtually ignored medication-taking behaviors which limits long-term effectiveness. To inform medication adherence interventions, information is needed to explicate the nature of the relationships between behaviors that support medication taking and medication adherence. The aim of this study was to identify patients' behaviors associated with taking medications and medication adherence in adults with CKD and multiple chronic conditions.

Method: A literature search was conducted using CINAHL Complete, MEDLINE and PsycINFO. We systematically reviewed qualitative studies reporting patients' experiences with chronic kidney disease and medication management. We conducted a meta-ethnographic synthesis of 5 qualitative studies meeting quality criteria to identify medication-taking behaviors.

Findings: Medication taking is complex. Our preliminary review identified 20 categories of behaviors involved in managing multiple medications for multiple chronic conditions. These behaviors were carried out in patients' daily lives and involved interactions with family members, healthcare providers and the healthcare system. Healthcare insurance, regulation and pharmaceutical availability added to the complexity of medication taking behaviors.

Conclusions: Day to day management of CKD and chronic conditions requires consistent yet complex medication-taking behaviors. Nephrology nurses can partner with patients to elucidate how these behaviors are enacted in day-to-day management and identify opportunities to intervene on specific behaviors to promote medication adherence.

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