HEALTH AWARENESS

Finding The Missing Piece In A Chronic Disease

(NAPSA)—We all know that you can't finish a jigsaw puzzle if a piece is missing. By the same token, you can't be sure your health is well protected if physicians are missing a key piece of information for making a diagnosis.

The Problem

The problem is, that can happen all too often. If chronic kidney disease isn't diagnosed until it's reached its later stages, you may face serious complications that can include heart disease, diabetes or complete kidney failure.

What Doctors Can Do

Fortunately, there are tests for this disease. It's routine for doctors to order a serum creatinine test, which measures how well a patient's kidneys are removing waste product from the bloodstream. That information, however, while valuable, doesn't paint a complete picture. There's something called estimated glomerular filtration rate, or eGFR, which gives more comprehensive information about how kidneys are performing—factoring in such things as a person's age, weight, height and sex. Not all doctors, though, ask diagnostic labs to provide that eGFR data.

What Labs Can Do

The good news is that fewer patients are going to have to worry about this. Labs belonging to the American Clinical Laboratory Association have agreed to voluntarily report eGFR information whenever doctors order the routine serum creatinine test. The Association represents approximately 70 percent of independent laboratory services in the U.S.

The eGFR lab test can help doctors diagnose chronic kidney disease earlier, when there are fewer complications.

What You Can Do

Chronic kidney disease can be difficult to diagnose. Often, there are no symptoms at all; in other cases, symptoms may include dry skin, fatigue, muscle cramps and excessive urination. If you or someone you care about shows such symptoms, see your doctor and ask about the "eGFR test." It could provide the essential information to make a complete and accurate diagnosis.

Learn More

For more information about the value of laboratory medicine, go to www.labresultsforlife.org.