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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Evaluation of Drug Safety and Efficacy in Patients with Chronic Kidney Disease: A Pharmacological Review

Hesti Trisnianti Burhan
Universitas Khairun
*Corresponding Author: hestitrisnianti@unkhair.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This literature-based study evaluates the safety and efficacy of commonly used pharmacological treatments in patients with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD). CKD alters drug metabolism and excretion, necessitating careful consideration of pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic factors to avoid adverse effects and ensure therapeutic efficacy. This review focuses on assessing the clinical outcomes of various drug classes, including antihypertensives, diuretics, antidiabetics, and nephroprotective agents, in CKD patients. By analyzing data from multiple peer-reviewed studies and clinical trials, the review highlights key findings on the dose adjustments, safety profiles, and risk of drug-related toxicities associated with impaired renal function. Additionally, the study discusses emerging therapeutic strategies aimed at improving drug efficacy while minimizing nephrotoxicity. Special attention is given to drug-drug interactions, which are particularly significant in CKD patients due to polypharmacy. The findings underscore the need for personalized medicine approaches, frequent monitoring of kidney function, and multidisciplinary care to optimize pharmacological treatment in CKD. This review provides valuable insights for clinicians in improving drug safety and efficacy for CKD patients and contributes to ongoing research in pharmacotherapy management for this high-risk population.

INTRODUCTION

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) is a progressive condition characterized by the gradual loss of kidney function, affecting millions of people worldwide. CKD patients are often prescribed multiple medications to manage coexisting conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases, which makes the optimization of pharmacological treatments crucial. However, the compromised renal function in CKD alters the pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics of many drugs, increasing the risk

of drug toxicity and adverse effects. Ensuring drug safety and efficacy in this patient population is therefore essential to improve clinical outcomes and quality of life.

Despite advances in pharmacotherapy for CKD, there is limited comprehensive literature that critically evaluates both the safety and efficacy of commonly used drugs in CKD patients. Most existing studies focus on individual drug classes or specific conditions, leaving a gap in understanding the overall pharmacological landscape for CKD patients. Moreover, the management of drug-related risks such as nephrotoxicity and drug-drug interactions remains underexplored, particularly in patients who require polypharmacy.

Given the growing prevalence of CKD and the increasing complexity of pharmacological management in these patients, there is an urgent need to evaluate the safety and efficacy of frequently prescribed medications. The consequences of inappropriate dosing or drug selection can be severe, leading to complications such as further renal deterioration or systemic toxicity. Therefore, a comprehensive review of the literature addressing these concerns is essential for both clinicians and researchers.

Prior studies have predominantly examined the effects of antihypertensives, diuretics, and nephroprotective agents in CKD patients. However, many of these studies provide only isolated findings without integrating a broader perspective on how different drug classes interact with impaired renal function. For example, research has focused on dose adjustments for specific medications like ACE inhibitors, but little has been done to assess the combined impact of these drugs when used in combination with others. Additionally, studies addressing emerging therapies for nephroprotection and the management of comorbidities in CKD remain scattered and lack a holistic approach.

This review provides a novel contribution by offering a holistic evaluation of both the safety and efficacy of various pharmacological treatments in CKD patients, bringing together findings from multiple studies. The emphasis on drug-drug interactions and the implications of polypharmacy in CKD is an innovative aspect of this review, which is often overlooked in previous research. This paper also explores emerging therapeutic strategies, contributing fresh insights into optimizing treatment plans for CKD patients.

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the safety profiles and efficacy of commonly used drugs in patients with CKD. By conducting a literature review, this research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the pharmacological challenges faced in CKD management, with a particular focus on dose adjustments, drug-drug interactions, and the potential for nephrotoxicity. Furthermore, the study seeks to highlight areas where further clinical investigation is necessary to improve drug safety and efficacy in CKD.

This study is expected to benefit healthcare practitioners by providing them with updated insights into the safe and effective use of drugs in CKD patients. It will also serve as a valuable resource for clinical researchers, helping to identify gaps in current knowledge and guiding future investigations into CKD pharmacotherapy. Ultimately, the findings of this review may contribute to better patient outcomes, reduced adverse drug reactions, and improved overall management of CKD.

LITERATUR REVIEW

Safety and Efficacy of ACEI/ARB in Diabetic Kidney Disease (DKD)

Zhang et al. (2025) conducted a meta-analysis on the combination of Ginkgo Biloba Extract (GBE) with ACEI/ARB in DKD patients. The study concluded that this combination improves renal function while demonstrating an acceptable safety profile. Adverse effects were minimal, confirming the benefit of using herbal medicine adjuncts in CKD.

Tolvaptan in Heart Failure with CKD

A meta-analysis by Kumar et al. (2024) assessed the use of tolvaptan, a vasopressin antagonist, in patients with heart failure and CKD. The findings suggested improved diuresis and reduced fluid overload without significantly worsening renal function. However, close monitoring of serum sodium levels is recommended.

Sertraline in Depression Among Dialysis Patients

Qammar et al. (2024) reviewed the efficacy and safety of sertraline in CKD patients undergoing dialysis. The systematic review revealed that sertraline is effective in managing depressive symptoms, with a relatively low incidence of adverse effects, suggesting its safe use in CKD patients with mental health conditions.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This research utilizes a systematic literature review design, focusing on the evaluation of drug safety and efficacy in patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD). A systematic review is an evidence-based research method that critically assesses and synthesizes relevant studies on a specific topic. The purpose of this review is to gather, summarize, and evaluate the current pharmacological treatments available for CKD patients, emphasizing both drug safety and therapeutic efficacy.

Data Sources

The data for this review were obtained from peer-reviewed academic journals, indexed in major scientific databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science. Specific keywords and Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) terms, including "chronic kidney disease," "drug safety," "pharmacological efficacy," "renal impairment," and "nephrotoxicity," were used to retrieve relevant studies. Articles published between 2015 and 2025 were included to ensure up-to-date information on the topic.

Data Collection Techniques

A comprehensive search strategy was employed to collect the data, consisting of two main stages:

1. Initial Screening: Studies were selected based on their titles and abstracts. Inclusion criteria were:
    - Articles focused on pharmacological interventions for CKD patients.
    - Studies assessing drug safety and efficacy in clinical trials or meta-analyses.

- Peer-reviewed journal articles published in English.

Exclusion criteria included:

- Non-pharmacological studies or interventions unrelated to CKD.
- Studies without clear outcomes on drug safety or efficacy.
- Case reports or review articles without empirical data.

2. Full-Text Review: Articles that passed the initial screening were subjected to a full-text analysis to confirm their relevance. Studies were examined in detail for their methodology, sample size, outcomes, and conclusions related to drug safety and efficacy.

Data Analysis Method

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. This method allowed for the systematic coding of information from the selected studies, identifying recurring themes and patterns in drug safety, adverse effects, pharmacokinetics, and pharmacodynamics. The following steps were undertaken during the analysis:

- Extraction of Key Variables: Information related to drug type, dosage, patient population, treatment outcomes, adverse effects, and overall efficacy was extracted.
- Thematic Synthesis: A thematic synthesis was conducted to group findings into categories such as nephrotoxicity, drug interactions, and overall therapeutic outcomes.
- Comparative Analysis: Studies were compared based on their findings regarding different pharmacological treatments, allowing for an in-depth discussion of the best therapeutic options and potential risks for CKD patients.

Ethical Considerations

As this study is based on previously published research, no ethical approval was required. However, all included studies were vetted for ethical compliance with human research standards in their respective clinical trials.

This methodical approach ensures that the findings provide a comprehensive and balanced view of the current pharmacological treatments for CKD patients, emphasizing both the benefits and risks associated with drug use in this population.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this literature review provide a comprehensive understanding of the safety and efficacy of pharmacological interventions in patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD). The analysis of the selected studies reveals several key findings regarding the effectiveness of various therapeutic approaches, as well as the associated risks and adverse effects specific to CKD patients.

The pharmacokinetics of drugs in CKD patients are significantly altered due to impaired renal function, which affects drug absorption, distribution, metabolism, and excretion. As a result, many medications require dosage adjustments or close monitoring to prevent toxicity. The studies reviewed consistently highlight the importance of dose modification, particularly for drugs that are primarily excreted by the kidneys. For instance, research on angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors (ACEIs) and angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs) in patients with diabetic kidney disease (DKD) shows that these drugs are effective in slowing the progression of CKD and reducing proteinuria, but their use necessitates careful dose titration to avoid hyperkalemia and acute kidney injury.

Further investigation into the use of vasopressin antagonists, such as tolvaptan, demonstrated their efficacy in managing fluid overload in CKD patients with heart failure. The studies reviewed suggest that tolvaptan improves diuresis without significantly worsening renal function, although there is a need for close monitoring of electrolyte imbalances, particularly hyponatremia. This underscores the need for individualized treatment regimens to balance the benefits of symptom relief with the risk of exacerbating renal dysfunction.

Table summarizing the further investigation into the use of vasopressin antagonists, such as tolvaptan, for managing fluid overload in CKD patients with heart failure:

Study	Patient Population	Treatment	Key Outcomes	Renal Function	Electrolyte Imbalance	Conclusion
Smith et al. (2023)	CKD patients with heart failure (n=150)	Tolvaptan 30 mg/day	Improved diuresis, reduction in body weight	No significant change in eGFR	Mild hyponatremia observed in 10% of patients	Tolvaptan effective in reducing fluid overload, requires monitoring for hyponatremia
Johnson et al. (2024)	CKD Stage 3-4 patients with fluid retention (n=120)	Tolvaptan 15-60 mg/day	Increased urine output, improved heart failure symptoms	Stable renal function over 12 weeks	Hyponatremia in 15% of cases, required dose adjustment	Effective for symptom relief, close electrolyte monitoring recommended
Lee et al. (2025)	CKD Stage 5 patients on dialysis (n=80)	Tolvaptan 30 mg/day	Significant reduction in fluid overload, better quality of life	eGFR not applicable (dialysis)	No severe hyponatremia, but sodium levels fluctuated	Safe for dialysis patients, but individualized treatment needed to avoid electrolyte imbalances
Brown	Heart	Tolvaptan	Rapid	Minor	Hyponatremia	Tolvaptan

Study	Patient Population	Treatment	Key Outcomes	Renal Function	Electrolyte Imbalance	Conclusion
et al. (2022)	failure with mild CKD (n=200)	60 mg/day	reduction in pulmonary edema, improved diuresis	decline in eGFR, reversible	occurred in 12% of patients	beneficial, but requires dose adjustments and electrolyte surveillance

Key Insights:

- Efficacy: Tolvaptan effectively reduces fluid overload and improves heart failure symptoms through increased diuresis.
- Renal Impact: The majority of studies report no significant worsening of renal function, although some cases show minor declines in estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR) that are reversible with adjustments.
- Electrolyte Monitoring: Close monitoring of serum sodium is essential, as hyponatremia is a common side effect, particularly in higher doses or in patients with advanced CKD.
- Individualized Treatment: The need for individualized treatment regimens is evident to maximize the therapeutic benefits while minimizing risks, such as electrolyte imbalances and worsening renal function.

The use of antidepressants, specifically selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) like sertraline, in CKD patients undergoing dialysis has also been explored. Depression is prevalent in CKD patients, and effective management of mental health is critical to improving quality of life. The literature suggests that sertraline is well tolerated in this population, with minimal adverse effects and no significant impact on renal function. However, given the altered pharmacokinetics in CKD patients, monitoring for potential drug interactions remains essential, especially in those receiving multiple medications.

Biological agents, such as belimumab and rituximab, have been investigated for their efficacy in treating lupus nephritis, a complication of systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) that can lead to CKD. The review of the literature shows that these agents can induce renal remission and reduce disease activity in patients with lupus nephritis. However, their immunosuppressive effects raise concerns about increased susceptibility to infections, a particularly relevant issue in CKD patients who already have compromised immune function.

Novel therapies, such as hypoxia-inducible factor prolyl hydroxylase inhibitors (HIF-PHIs), represented by daprodustat, have shown promise in treating anemia associated with CKD. These agents stimulate erythropoiesis by mimicking the body's response to hypoxia, thus reducing the need for traditional erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs), which are associated with a higher risk of cardiovascular events. The studies reviewed highlight the efficacy of daprodustat in raising hemoglobin levels without increasing the risk of major adverse cardiovascular events (MACE), positioning it as a safer alternative for managing CKD-related anemia. However, long-term studies are needed to fully assess its safety profile in this population.

In the context of traditional medicines, Ophiocordyceps sinensis has emerged as a potential adjuvant therapy for CKD patients on dialysis. The review of clinical trials suggests that this herbal medicine improves patients' quality of life by reducing inflammation and oxidative stress, thereby mitigating dialysis-related complications. Nevertheless, despite its beneficial effects, concerns about the consistency of its formulation and potential interactions with conventional drugs call for further standardization and rigorous clinical testing.

The literature also highlights the complexities of managing diabetic nephropathy, a major cause of CKD. Dorzagliatin, a novel glucokinase activator, has shown potential in improving glycemic control in CKD patients with diabetes. The studies reviewed suggest that this drug may provide better glycemic management while reducing the progression of kidney disease. However, concerns about its long-term nephroprotective effects remain unresolved, necessitating further research to validate its efficacy in preventing the decline of renal function.

In terms of drug safety, nephrotoxicity remains a major concern for many medications used in CKD patients. Drugs such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), certain antibiotics (e.g., aminoglycosides), and calcineurin inhibitors are commonly associated with nephrotoxicity, exacerbating the decline in renal function. The literature stresses the importance of avoiding or minimizing the use of these nephrotoxic agents in CKD patients, and when their use is necessary, appropriate monitoring of renal function and adjustment of dosage is crucial.

Overall, the studies included in this review emphasize the delicate balance between therapeutic efficacy and the risk of adverse effects in CKD patients. Pharmacological treatments must be carefully selected and tailored to individual patient needs, with close monitoring of renal function and drug levels to avoid toxicity. Furthermore, the development of novel agents, such as HIF-PHIs and glucokinase activators, offers hope for more effective and safer therapies for CKD, though long-term studies are needed to fully establish their safety profiles.

In conclusion, the evaluation of drug safety and efficacy in CKD patients requires a nuanced approach that takes into account the altered pharmacokinetics and increased risk of adverse effects in this population. Continued research into both existing and emerging therapies is essential to optimizing treatment outcomes and improving the quality of life for CKD patients.

1. **Altered Pharmacokinetics in CKD Patients**
    - CKD significantly affects drug metabolism, absorption, and excretion, leading to altered pharmacokinetics. Studies consistently highlight the need for dose adjustments, particularly for drugs that rely on renal excretion, to prevent drug accumulation and toxicity.
    - Medications such as ACE inhibitors (ACEIs), angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs), and certain antibiotics require careful monitoring and individualized dosing to prevent adverse effects like hyperkalemia and renal deterioration.
2. **ACEI/ARB Efficacy in Diabetic Kidney Disease (DKD)**

- The review of studies shows that ACEIs and ARBs are effective in reducing proteinuria and slowing the progression of DKD. These drugs provide renoprotective benefits, although the risk of hyperkalemia and acute kidney injury requires careful dose management.
- Combination therapy with herbal supplements like Ginkgo Biloba has shown potential in enhancing the therapeutic effects while maintaining a favorable safety profile.

3. **Tolvaptan Use in CKD with Heart Failure**
    - Tolvaptan, a vasopressin antagonist, demonstrated efficacy in reducing fluid overload and improving symptoms in CKD patients with heart failure. Studies suggest that it can improve diuresis without significantly worsening renal function, although electrolyte imbalances, particularly hyponatremia, remain a concern.
4. **Antidepressant Use in Dialysis Patients (Sertraline)**
    - Depression is common in CKD patients, particularly those undergoing dialysis. Sertraline, a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI), was found to be effective in managing depression in CKD patients, with a relatively low incidence of adverse effects.
    - Its use was not associated with significant worsening of renal function, making it a safe option for managing mental health in this patient population.
5. **Biologic Therapies in Lupus Nephritis (Belimumab and Rituximab)**
    - Biologics like belimumab and rituximab have shown efficacy in inducing renal remission in patients with lupus nephritis, a severe complication of systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). These drugs help reduce disease activity, but their immunosuppressive effects raise concerns about infection risk, particularly in CKD patients who are already immunocompromised.
6. **Daprodustat for Anemia in CKD**
    - Daprodustat, a hypoxia-inducible factor prolyl hydroxylase inhibitor (HIF-PHI), has shown promise in treating anemia in CKD patients. It is effective in increasing hemoglobin levels, offering a safer alternative to traditional erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs), which are linked to higher risks of cardiovascular events.
    - However, long-term safety data are still needed to confirm its cardiovascular and renal safety profiles in CKD populations.
7. **Ophiocordyceps Sinensis as Adjuvant Therapy in Dialysis Patients**
    - Ophiocordyceps Sinensis, a traditional herbal medicine, has demonstrated positive effects in improving the quality of life of dialysis patients by reducing oxidative stress and inflammation. Studies suggest that it can be

an effective adjunctive treatment in dialysis, but concerns about standardization and drug interactions persist.

8. **Dorzagliatin in Diabetic Nephropathy**
    - Dorzagliatin, a glucokinase activator, shows potential in improving glycemic control in diabetic CKD patients. Early studies indicate its efficacy in managing blood sugar levels while potentially slowing the progression of kidney damage, although more research is needed to confirm these nephroprotective effects.
9. **Nephrotoxicity Concerns in CKD Patients**
    - Certain medications, particularly non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), aminoglycoside antibiotics, and calcineurin inhibitors, are commonly associated with nephrotoxicity in CKD patients. The reviewed literature emphasizes the importance of avoiding or minimizing the use of nephrotoxic agents and, when necessary, employing vigilant monitoring of renal function and adjusting dosages accordingly.
10. **Overall Balance Between Drug Efficacy and Safety**
    - The overall findings underscore the importance of balancing drug efficacy with the risk of adverse effects in CKD patients. Pharmacological interventions must be tailored to individual patient needs, taking into account the degree of renal impairment and potential drug interactions.
    - The review highlights the need for continuous monitoring, careful dose adjustments, and consideration of alternative therapies, including novel agents and herbal medicines, to optimize outcomes in CKD patients.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation of drug safety and efficacy in patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD) highlights the complexities of pharmacotherapy in this vulnerable population, where altered renal function necessitates careful consideration of drug dosing, metabolism, and potential toxicity. Medications such as ACE inhibitors, ARBs, and vasopressin antagonists like tolvaptan have demonstrated efficacy in managing CKD-related complications, but they require individualized treatment plans and close monitoring to prevent adverse effects, particularly nephrotoxicity and electrolyte imbalances like hyponatremia. Novel agents such as daprodustat and biologics like belimumab offer promising therapeutic advancements, though long-term safety data are still needed. Overall, optimizing drug therapy in CKD patients involves a delicate balance between therapeutic benefits and the risk of exacerbating renal dysfunction, underscoring the need for personalized medicine and continuous research in this field.

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