



HEALTH AWARENESS

Anemia May Compound Other Health Risks

(NAPSA)—For people with serious medical conditions, such as chronic kidney disease, cancer or congestive heart failure, there may be an additional health risk that could go overlooked or untreated: anemia.

Anemia is characterized by a decrease in the body's total number of red blood cells (RBCs). RBCs contain hemoglobin, a red, iron-rich protein that carries oxygen from the lungs to all of the body's tissues. Oxygen provides the energy the body needs to support its normal activities.

The production of RBCs is stimulated by a hormone known as erythropoietin, which is produced in the kidneys. Serious diseases such as chronic kidney disease, cancer and AIDS (or their treatments) can damage the kidneys, resulting in decreased RBC production.

Historically, doctors have viewed anemia as an abnormal laboratory value rather than as a serious condition that can adversely affect a patient's health and longevity. As a result, many physicians do not treat anemia, even though it is easily diagnosed and there are effective medications available.

"Apart from the serious health risks many chronic diseases pose, when patients also have anemia, their risk of more serious illness and death greatly increases," said Dr. Allan Nissenson, professor of medicine and director of the dialysis program at the University of California at Los Angeles, and co-chair of the National Anemia Action Council (NAAC).

Nearly 100 percent of chronic kidney disease patients have ane-



People with serious medical conditions should speak to their doctors about anemia.

mia, and as many as 25 percent of chronic heart failure patients, rheumatoid arthritis patients and cancer patients have it as well. Independent of the underlying disease, anemia is associated with increased mortality (risk of death), increased morbidity (risk of disease) and decreased quality of life.

"Treatment of anemia associated with serious disease tends to focus first on addressing the underlying disease. But if anemia persists or symptoms worsen, treatment of the anemia itself is vital to help prevent the development of severe, possibly life-threatening complications, improve patients, health and enhance quality of life," noted Dr. Nissenson. "Anemia is often easily corrected with available medications proven to be very safe and effective."

NAAC's mission is to raise awareness of the prevalence, symptoms, consequences and under-treatment of anemia. To learn more, visit the Web site at www.anemia.org.