Letter to Editor

LESSONS FROM THE 2026 AUSTRIAN NEPHROLOGY NURSING MEETING: PATIENT SAFETY, EDUCATION, AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

Panagiota Tsikala

Department of Nephrology and Dialysis, University Hospital Vienna (AKH Wien), Vienna, Austria

Author for correspondence: Panagiota Tsikala panagiotatsikala@gmail.com

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Dear Editor,

The 2026 Austrian Nephrology Nursing Meeting, held in Vienna on 6 March 2026 as part of the World Kidney Day activities (1) and organised in collaboration with EDTNA/ERCA, brought together nephrology nurses, educators, researchers, and healthcare partners to discuss current developments in kidney care (2,3). Throughout the meeting, patient safety, specialised education, and international collaboration emerged as the key themes shaping the future of nephrology nursing (4,5).

The Austrian Nephrology Nursing Meeting 2026 demonstrated that professional education extends beyond the dissemination of scientific knowledge. It provides a platform for collaboration, critical reflection, leadership development, and the translation of evidence into safer clinical practice. By aligning the meeting with World Kidney Day activities and holding it shortly after the World Health Assembly recognised kidney disease as a global public health priority, the event successfully connected local educational initiatives with broader international healthcare priorities.

The scientific programme highlighted the central role of nursing leadership, professional competence, and patient safety in delivering high-quality nephrology care. Beyond delivering dialysis treatments, specialist nephrology nurses increasingly contribute to symptom management, patient education, vascular access management, quality improvement, multidisciplinary decision-making, and the implementation of evidence-based practice.

A symposium dedicated to chronic kidney disease-associated pruritus (CKD-aP) emphasised the considerable burden of this frequently under-recognised symptom on patients' quality of life (6,7). The symposium reinforced the pivotal role of nephrology nurses in recognising symptom burden, implementing systematic assessment, documenting symptoms, and translating emerging evidence into routine clinical practice.

One of the strongest messages from the meeting was the need to balance evidence-based practice with compassionate, person-centred care. Presentations explored the psychosocial impact of chronic kidney disease, the challenges associated with pregnancy during dialysis, and the expanding role of advanced practice nurses in supporting patients with increasingly complex care needs.

Practical sessions focused on ultrasound-guided vascular access cannulation, infection prevention, and evidence-based vascular access management. These workshops demonstrated how advanced clinical skills, combined with adherence to best practice, can reduce complications, improve patient outcomes, and enhance the safety of haemodialysis treatment.

An important strength of the meeting was its international perspective. Participants from Austria, Greece, Germany, and Switzerland compared educational pathways, professional responsibilities, and models of nephrology nursing practice. Such dialogue strengthens professional confidence, encourages innovation, and contributes to the harmonisation of specialist nephrology nursing across Europe.

Patient safety emerged as the overarching message throughout the meeting, reinforcing the essential role of nephrology nurses in preventing harm, improving quality of care, and leading evidence-based practice (8,9). Ultimately, investing in specialist nephrology nursing education is an investment in patient safety. As kidney care continues to evolve, empowering nurses through education, international collaboration, leadership development, and research will remain essential

to strengthening the profession and improving the quality, safety, and person-centredness of care for people living with kidney disease.

Finally, continuing professional development is fundamental to ensuring safe, evidence-based, and person-centred nephrology nursing practice. Scientific meetings provide more than educational updates; they create opportunities to exchange knowledge, strengthen professional networks, and translate emerging evidence into clinical practice.

ETHICS STATEMENT

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

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