Impact of Vitamin D Supplementation on Vascular Function, Vascular Structure and Immune Regulation in Patients with Chronic Kidney Disease and Low Vitamin D Levels – A Pilot Randomised Trial

Dr Rebeka Jenkins1,2, Dr Debasish Banerjee1,2, Dr Ingrid Dumitriu2, Dr Irina Chis Ster2, Dr Emily Heavey3, Professor Juan Carlos Kaski2

1St George’s University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London, United Kingdom, 2St George’s University, London, London, UK, 3University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, UK

BACKGROUND
Vitamin D deficiency contributes to the excess cardiovascular morbidity and mortality in patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD), yet there is limited evidence from randomised controlled trials (RCT) for a beneficial effect of vitamin D supplementation. Creative study methodology can avoid prohibitively large and lengthy trials and contribute to understanding of mechanistic pathways.

METHODS
A pilot study was performed to assess the feasibility of a single-blinded RCT of cholecalciferol supplementation (5x 20,000 IU over 20 weeks) versus no supplementation in patients with CKD Stage 3-4 and serum total 25-hydroxyvitamin D <75 nmol/l on vascular function (assessed by flow mediated dilatation of the brachial artery), vascular structure (assessed by carotid intima media thickness), and absolute frequency and percentage of CD4+CD28null T lymphocytes and regulatory T cells (implicated in the immuneregulation of atherogenesis). The study tested methods of participant recruitment, participant retention, randomisation, acceptability and adherence to group-specific cholecalciferol supplementation instructions. Preliminary statistical analyses were performed to derive the necessary input for larger settings.

RESULTS
40.9% of eligible patients were recruited reaching 72% of target over 12 weeks. The retention rate was 91.6%. Cholecalciferol treatment and control groups were well-matched at baseline (see table). Quantitative and qualitative analysis of participant feedback demonstrated a largely positive attitude to participation with thematic analysis identifying a high prevalence of the theme of positivity of experience with subthemes of a beneficial feeling, confidence and altruism. The data showed string evidence for a significant difference in the serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D levels at study completion between the cholecalciferol treatment and control groups, the higher levels in the cholecalciferol treatment group remaining significant after adjusting for the baseline 25-hydroxyvitamin D level with analysis of covariance (51.32 mmol/l difference between groups, 95% CI [36.28, 66.37], p<0.001. This indicates adherence to the group-specific cholecalciferol supplementation instructions. At follow up there was no significant difference between the cholecalciferol treatment and control groups in flow mediated dilatation (p=0.49), carotid intima media thickness (p=0.95), percentage of CD4+CD28null T lymphocytes (p=0.43), absolute frequency of CD4+CD28null T lymphocytes (p=0.21), percentage of regulatory T cells (p=0.25) or absolute frequency of regulatory T cells (p=0.45).

CONCLUSION
A pilot trial performed using the methodology of this single-blinded pilot study of cholecalciferol supplementation generated results which can inform the planning of future a priori statistically powered similar experiments.