Many kidney patients not referred for transplants

By Jill Day

There is widespread acceptance that kidney transplants are the best treatment for patients with end-stage kidney disease, many of these patients do not get transplant evaluations, and very few get transplanted.

Looking into the possible reasons why, a study of Georgia’s three transplant centers found only 28 percent of adult patients starting dialysis referred for kidney transplant evaluation within six months.

“I don’t expect much difference in other parts of the country,” said Shiree Taylor, associate professor of the kidney and pancreas transplant program at the Emory University School of Medicine.

She explained that not only does the ratio of patients eligible for transplant differ by location, but it also changes over time as dialysis practices evolve. “It’s a lot about who’s on dialysis,” Taylor said.

Suroshkumar explained that a referral is the first step for patients to get a transplant. At the transplant center, they would be evaluated to see if they are a good candidate for a transplant, and if they are, they would put on a waiting list.

With a transplant, he said, “it becomes much more personal for people—people living on dialysis. And you have to consider it a long-term life. One thing you don’t want to avoid is the list.”

Further, he explained that not all patients on dialysis want to go on a transplant program. “Some may have come to a time in their life that they are not in the mood for more,” Suroshkumar said.

He added that the rate of children on dialysis is lower because they have a longer life before a transplantation.”

“Kidney transplantation offers the greatest chance of survival in the long term,” Suroshkumar said. “It’s a very big step forward for patients who are eligible for a transplant, and we know that the outcomes are much more favorable.”