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KIDNEY CENTER

Podcast Transcript:

Dr. Ron Falk

ANCA Vasculitis Treatments

“ANCA Treatments: Long-Term Effects”

Patient: I'm concerned about the long-term effects of being on all these drugs. You talked about people can be anemic, that you're at risk for certain cancers. Can you talk a little bit about these long term effects?

Dr. Falk: I am too. I share that view. As a matter of fact, physicians who have these diseases invariably take themselves off drugs more rapidly than almost any other group. So it always interests me when physicians want to prescribe these drugs for the long haul when they themselves were on this kind of immunosuppressive therapy, they would want to be off of the drugs as fast as possible.

The principle that must be used is, the question of How long do I have to use any drug? What's the evidence that I need to still be on any of these immunomodulatory drugs? If my disease is going to flare, if I have a high chance of flaring, if I flare I'm really going to have severe organ damage, then there's a better reason to stay on an immunosuppressive drug, but you should be on the lowest possible dose that keeps you in remission.

I think as all of us are moving forward, the question has to be, What is the evidence in me that I have to remain on any drug? If I monitor myself carefully and I can pick up an early flare, can that flare get back under control? Can I stop medications? That's the era that we're in. If one has to remain on immunosuppressive drugs long-term, remember if you suppress your immune system, you have a higher chance of having cancers. If you have to remain on drugs of this kind, you have to do cancer surveillance at a more intense and more frequent basis than you would have to do if you were off of these medications. So the overall strategy for everybody is, let's get people off of these drugs, if we can't, let's get to the lowest possible dose of the least toxic drug available. The era of endless use of drugs should only be reserved for those people who have shown that they have to be on long-term immunosuppressive therapy.