



UNC
KIDNEY CENTER

Podcast Transcript:

Dr. Ron Falk

Membranous Nephropathy

“What is Membranous Nephropathy?”

Patient: I've just been diagnosed with Membranous Nephropathy. What is it? How do you spell it?!

Dr Falk: Membranous Nephropathy is a membrane—the membrane that is found in the small filters of your kidney. Each one of these filters is called a glomerulus. And these glomeruli filter blood, getting rid of toxins and water. The membrane, which acts like a filter, is a small bit of tissue across which toxins and water escape the blood and get into the urine.

So Membranous Nephropathy is a disease process which affects that very thin membrane, and causes what in general is known as a glomerulonephritis, or inflammation of those tiny filters. You have about 1.4 million filters in both kidneys—1.4 million glomeruli and many, many thin membranes that are part of all of those glomeruli. So Membranous Nephropathy then is damage to that glomerular basement membrane. And what it really is are tiny, little immune deposits—deposits of an antibody that somehow is lodged along that membrane. And just like in a car, when a membrane is full of debris, it clogs up and doesn't function well. And so Membranous Nephropathy then, is the disruption or alteration of that membrane, making it so your glomeruli don't filter well. In fact, what happens is that blood and protein leak from the blood stream into the urine, and that's how you can actually detect abnormalities or alterations in any kind of disease that hurts these little filters called glomeruli.