



UNC
KIDNEY CENTER

Podcast Transcript:

Dr. Ron Falk

Membranous Nephropathy

“How did I get this disease?”

Patient: How did I get this disease?

Dr Falk: Oh, if I could only tell you, like all of the other glomerular diseases that I can't tell you the cause of. Membranous Nephropathy is one of these glomerular diseases that we really don't know the cause of. It can be caused by some drugs, it can be caused in older individuals. (And by older, I mean anybody who's older than we are) Certainly, people who are older than 55 or 60. Cancers. And that population can cause Membranous Nephropathy. There are many autoimmune diseases, for example, patients with lupus can get Membranous Nephropathy.

But what is called idiopathic, and in medicine when we use the term idiopathic, it means, “we don't know”, idiopathic Membranous Nephropathy for some reason your body makes an antibody, an autoimmune reaction to either a protein that's deposited along those membranes, or to actually a structure within the glomerular basement membrane itself. And the real question then is, what causes this antibody to form in the first place? And unfortunately we don't know. But what is important to know is that there's nothing that you did that caused this disease. If there were, we would know how to get rid of that cause and we would know how to cure this disease. So unfortunately, in the vast majority of people, we just still don't know.