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From Ancient Ischuria to Modern Acute Kidney Injury

The conceptual evolution of acute kidney injury (AKI) mirrors the broader history of both human and veterinary medicine, as shifting disease-classification frameworks redefine our understanding of age-old ailments.

Although the term “AKI” is recent, the condition has afflicted humans and animals since antiquity, initially recognized by the ominous sign of suppressed urine output (known as oliguria or anuria). Historical figures from Galen to 19th-century physicians described “ischuria renalis” and “acute Bright’s disease,” grouping what we now identify as AKI under various broad, symptomatic categories such as nephritis.

A pivotal shift occurred in the 20th century, spurred by studies of traumatic shock and wartime medicine, which elucidated the pathophysiology of acute tubular injury and coalesced around the term “acute renal failure” (ARF). This medical model, focused on dialysis treatment, dominated for decades.

The contemporary transition from ARF to AKI reflects a modern, evidence-based paradigm—emphasizing earlier detection, prevention, and a public-health approach—much like the evolution seen in chronic kidney disease.

This historical journey from symptomatic observation to a nuanced, proactive clinical entity sets the stage for our Continuing Education feature article in this issue: [“A Guide to Acute Kidney Injury in Small Animals”](#) by Dr. Philip Krawec (p. 40).

Dr. Krawec’s article makes it clear that AKI is a condition whose timeless relevance now meets advanced diagnostic and therapeutic understanding.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon Platt".

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