

## Kidney disease rising in town of infamous *E. coli* outbreak

WALKERTON, ONTARIO — Early results from a health clinic study of the effects of this town's tainted water indicate there could be as much as a 400-percent jump in kidney disease among residents.

The clinic, the [Toronto Star](#) reported, is part of a CAD\$5-million (US\$3.2 million) study into the impacts of the *E. coli* and other bacteria and parasites that killed seven and made 2,300 sick in May 2000.

"We're surprised, but the good news is that it's totally treatable," said Dr. Bill Clark, who is heading a health clinic in Walkerton, according to the article.

In normal circumstances, the *Star* reported, over a 10- to 15-year period in a town the size of Walkerton with a population of 4,800, about 20 people develop proteinuria, meaning their kidneys are absorbing an abnormal amount of protein and they will require life-long treatment with drugs called angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors.

Due to the contamination of Walkerton's drinking water, doctors were expecting, at the most, to see the number of cases jump by 50 percent, according to Clark, who estimated the total number would probably be up to four times the normal number of cases, the article said.

To date, the clinic, which opened in the Walkerton hospital in February, has seen about 1,300 of the 3,500 residents who have registered and the exact number of cases of proteinuria hasn't been calculated, the newspaper reported.

Unlike the hemolytic uremic syndrome that caused kidney failure among dozens of Walkerton children, making them deathly ill in the early days of the tragedy, proteinuria can be successfully treated with medication taken at home. But if it is left untreated it can lead to kidney failure, the article said.

Clark said in the story that it's too soon to draw conclusions and he doesn't want to scare anyone, but he recommends that anyone who drank Walkerton's contaminated water be checked out for the disease, as patients suffering from the early stages of proteinuria may not have any symptoms.