

Toolkit on Creating a Young Nephrologists Committee: An ISN Young Nephrologists Committee Project to Empower Young Nephrologists Worldwide



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Introduction

Young nephrologists constitute a significant proportion of the

nephrology workforce worldwide and represent the future of our battle to mitigate the annually growing burden of kidney disease.¹ Unfortunately, they often face challenges related to unmet needs of the early-career nephrologists in education, research, mentorship, and advocacy² leading to an increased prevalence in burnout and a decline in interest

toward the specialty.³ In 2007, the ISN established the Young Nephrologists Committee (YNC) to increase the involvement of young nephrologists in the global nephrology community.⁴ The role of the ISN YNC has evolved over time. Initially, it promoted ISN activities such as global outreach programs, sister centers, fellowships, research programs, and others to young nephrologists from both developed and developing countries. Over the years, the ISN YNC has taken the mission to focus on improving the education and building the capacity of young nephrologists, particularly those from low and middle-income countries; building capacity in research; and encouraging more equitable, quality nephrology trainings worldwide.⁴ The ISN YNC is intricately involved in helping craft the future of the ISN. Currently, the ISN YNC comprises a subcommittee dedicated to the Young Nephrologists Network—a platform offering the younger members-at-large an opportunity to get involved with the ISN.⁵ It has representatives in each one of the essential committees and ISN workgroups, has a dedicated session at the World Congress of Nephrology with several of its members participating in the organization of the congress. Other societies adopt similar approaches, and the board of the Young Nephrologist’s Platform of the European Renal Association plays a vibrant role within the society.⁶ In addition, well-established dynamic young nephrologists committees and clubs include the “Club des Jeunes Néphrologues” in France, the UK Kidney Association’s Renal SpR club, the YNC of the African Association of Nephrology, the “Plataforma Jóvenes Nefrólogos Españoles (JovSEN)”, the young

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Why are you embarking in this? If you are answering YES to these questions, this may be for you!

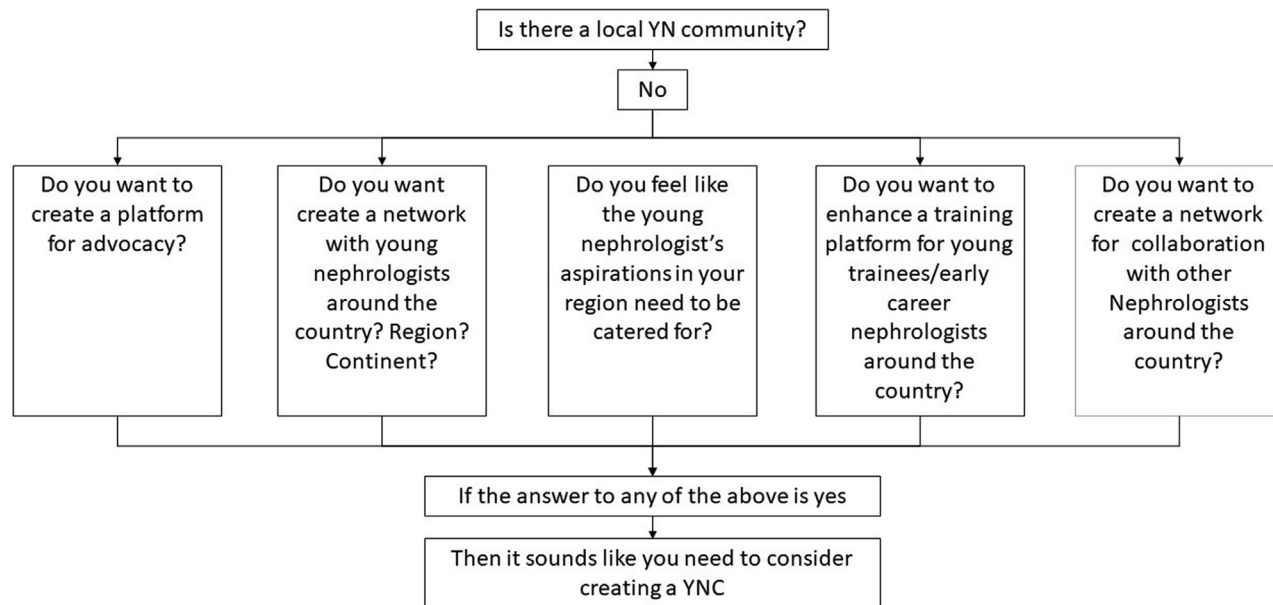


Figure 1. The first step. Defining the mission of the YNC. YNC, Young Nephrologists Committee.

Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology, the Community of Young Nephrologists of the Newly Independent States and Russia, and the “Comite de Nefrologos Jovenes - SLANH Joven” representing the early-career nephrologists of Latin America since January 2024. Many successful initiatives have been started by these YNCs. A few examples include a Renal Taster Day and a Renal Crash Course in the UK developed by the UK SpR club to promote recruitment into nephrology training.⁷ The early-career participants of 2022 ISN Emerging Leaders program cohort, addressed the global challenge of climate change by successfully promoting “green nephrology.”⁸ Plataforma Jóvenes Nefrólogos Españoles with the endorsement of the largest patient association in Spain, recently developed a project “Discover and Take Care of Your Kidneys” based on gamification learning. However, dedicated committees and societies consisting of and representing young nephrologists need to grow in all

parts of the world. To build capacity and help motivate young nephrologists form a dedicated committee within their national or regional society, the ISN YNC took the initiative of building a Toolkit on Creating a YNC.

Methods

To develop the Toolkit on Creating a YNC, online interviews and discussions were initially held with representatives of several existing YNCs worldwide to analyze their aims, organizational structure, activities, and challenges with the aim of defining the most successful practices. The ISN Young Nephrology Network subcommittee then developed the first draft of the toolkit comprising several sections covering different aspects of the creation and development of a YNC. The draft was independently reviewed by leaders of the YNC of African Association of Nephrology, Plataforma Jóvenes Nefrólogos Españoles, Club des Jeunes Nephrologues, UK Kidney Association Renal SpR Club, the young Australian and New Zealand

Society of Nephrology, and the Community of Young Nephrologists of the Newly Independent States and Russia. Critical feedback was analyzed and integrated into the draft, which was further reviewed and approved by the executive director of ISN. All comments and amendments were incorporated into the final version of the toolkit. The toolkit is freely accessible as a downloadable document on the ISN website (<https://www.theisn.org/initiatives/toolkits/ync-toolkit/>), and will be officially launched at the ISN World Congress of Nephrology 2024 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Structure of the Toolkit

The final version of the toolkit comprises 7 sections with flowcharts covering practical aspects of the creation and development of a YNC. These sections include the following: (i) how to approach your regional/national society to start a YNC within the society, (ii) defining the concept and mission and the structure of the future committee, (iii) recruitment and

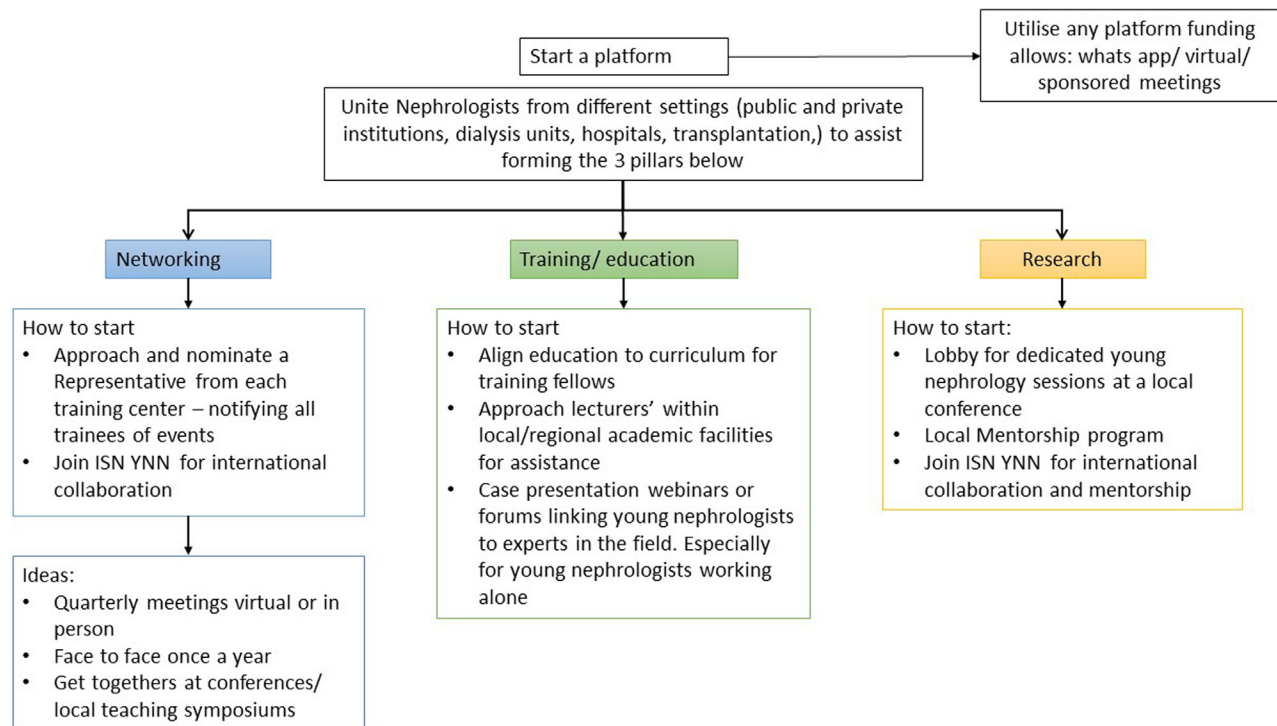


Figure 2. Identifying educational, networking and research opportunities to guide the Young Nephrologists Committee activities. ISN YNN, International Society of Nephrology Young Nephrologists Network.

how to grow, (iv) getting support from the national societies, (v) planning effective communication, (vi) benefits and solutions to challenges, and (vii) involving members as representatives in national or regional societies' committees. Each section comprises a series of questions and answers addressing various challenges and potential solutions.

One of the most important aspects of a YNC is that it should operate within an existing national or regional nephrology association. This is to avoid potential legal complexities associated with the creation of an entirely independent association and to get support and guidance from the established society and its experienced members. However, before approaching the representatives of the local association an initial step is recommended: assessing the most pressing needs faced by early-career nephrologists in the region, which may include, as an example, a lack of educational resources,

advocacy initiatives, or networking opportunities (Figure 1). It is preferred to reach out to the national or regional professional nephrology association once the mission of the YNC is delineated and the possible steps toward its achievement are defined. A section of the toolkit is specifically dedicated to the most efficient ways to approach a local or regional association for support and endorsement of the new committee.

The emerging YNC can nurture the following 3 potential domains for career development: networking, education, and research exposure (Figure 2). A charter or terms of reference that formally acknowledges the YNC's existence, regulates its structure and activities, and lists the domains of exercise should be developed, approved by the overarching association, and regularly reviewed; this process is addressed in another section of the toolkit. After the foundations of the

committee have been set, a core group of enthusiastic like-minded young nephrologists should then launch and bring to fruition the identified areas of activities. Furthermore, after the YNC is established, a viable plan of action is required to maintain regular activities, recruit new members, and support its participants. Dedicated sections of the toolkit propose numerous formal and informal activities to attract early-career nephrologists, including educational modules, research activities (e.g., multicenter collaboration in observational research and evidence synthesis), mentorship programs, advocacy projects, and capacity building courses, as well as sessions for trainees, competitions, quizzes, and social events. The topics and formats should be chosen based on both worldwide trends and region-specific demands of the early-career specialists. However, activities alone, no matter how well-organized, are insufficient to engage as many

young nephrologists as possible. To achieve this, there should be effective diffusion of information and networks of communication should be established through various channels under the supervision of a communication liaison or administrator. Being an active part of a successful YNC involves voluntary executive members who carry the burden of non-remunerated responsibilities. In the toolkit, we suggest several ways to ensure continued engagement by executive members and members-at-large, including tailored annual fees, free journal subscriptions, exclusive events, as well as career advancement and leadership opportunities to achieve professional recognition. Executive members of the YNC could be promoted to become members of the national nephrology society committees or the members of the secretariat of the annual congresses. Beyond this, advocating within individual hospitals and universities for protected nonclinical time to dedicate to the running of these committees, is also critical.

The toolkit sections covering these principles are not intended to be a strict set of rules, but rather a collection of ideas, guidance, and tips, that could be adapted by young nephrologists depending on their local challenges and needs. Depending on the feedback following the toolkit release, further amendments and changes will be incorporated into its next version to keep it most relevant and useful in the diverse settings worldwide.

Conclusion

The Toolkit on Creating a YNC, developed by the ISN's YNC, is the first comprehensive manual for young nephrologists to guide

building a dedicated committee to address their challenges and career development needs. The existing YNCs have already shown high efficacy in addressing existing problems in nephrology. Young nephrologists can play a significant role in promoting kidney health, tackling global issues, and encouraging the growth of our profession, which continues to be a pressing issue in our society. However, such initiatives can only be achieved through a well-structured and efficient group of enthusiastic professionals. For this reason, YNCs should be encouraged and developed in all regions, especially those facing high levels of inequity. We hope that our toolkit will suit the needs of all young nephrologists worldwide and help them create flourishing communities.

DISCLOSURE

MG reported being an employee at the International Society of Nephrology. MM reported receiving grants from AstraZeneca; personal payment or honoraria from GSK, Esteve, and AstraZeneca; support for attending meetings and/or travel from Chiesi; personal fees for participation on a Data Safety Monitoring Board or Advisory Board from Bayer; stock or stock options for AstraZeneca and Healthcatalyst outside submitted work. SK reported the following leadership or fiduciary roles in the following societies and boards: ISN, Chair of the YNC, member of the education workgroup, member of the North America board, member of the social media team, advisor to the Middle East board (all positions unpaid); Societe Francophone de Nephrologie, Dialyse et Transplantation. Member of the

commission of clinical nephrology, unpaid; member of the webinars team, unpaid; American Society of Onconephrology, cochair of the education committee, unpaid. All the other authors declared no competing interests.

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