

Diabetes or hypertension self-treatment leading to kidney failure

By LOH FOON FONG

PETALING JAYA: Malaysians who self-treat diabetes or hypertension by buying over-the-counter medication run the risk of kidney failures, a specialist warned.

Consultant nephrologist Dr Goh Bak Leong said based on observations patients had the tendency to self-treat diabetes and hypertension after just one or two visits.

"Some patients may visit their doctors once or twice and then decide to buy their own medication instead of seeing their doctors on a regular basis.

"This lack of doctor's monitoring is dangerous. The conditions may worsen and the patients don't realise it.

"These patients need to see a doctor even when there are no symptoms because by the time symptoms are discovered it will be too late. It can be a stroke or heart failure or kidney failure," said Dr Goh, who is also the organising chairman of the World Kidney Day 2008.

Moreover, patients needed to follow-up with their doctors so that the latter could find the best form of treatment or combination of treatments to keep the conditions under control if the initial medicine did not work, he said.

They needed a long-term treatment plan for the diseases, he added.

He said for hypertension, a patient needed to reach the desired or target pressure level of 130/80mmHg, while for diabetes the sugar level should be between 4 to 7mmol/l (for fasting blood sugar) to ensure the diseases do not destroy their vital organs.

On patients who go from one doctor to another thinking there is a cure for the diseases, Dr Goh said they have to know that there is no cure for these diseases but only control and slowing down the devastating effects.

"It is best to prevent the diseases from occurring and this can be achieved by having a healthy lifestyle," he said.