

Don't self-treat, warn experts

Specialist: Diabetes or hypertension sufferers run risk of kidney failures

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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. Their conditions may worsen and the patients won'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.

National Kidney Foundation (NKF) second vice-chairman Dr Tan Chwee Choon said based on the National Renal Registry 2006, nearly 3,000 new patients were seeking kidney dialysis treatment yearly and the annual growth rate was about 10%.

Ten years ago there were 50

kidney-failure patients per million of the population compared with 118 per million population in 2006, with half of them developing it as a result of diabetes, he said.

NKF Board of Governors vice-president Lynn Kulasingham said kidney disease was a silent killer, had few symptoms and could be detected only through health screening.

"The disease is common, harmful but treatable.

"We encourage people to seek treatment so that they don't end up with kidney dialysis which is not only costly but there is also a long waiting list," he said during the launch of the NKF Kidney Care community programme "Are your kidneys ok?" in conjunction with the World Kidney Day 2008.



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