

# Educating kidneys

Malaysia's National Kidney Foundation marks the 3rd World Kidney Day by resolving to step up its public education efforts to combat kidney diseases.

**L**IFE was going well for 23-year-old Muhammed Shahrul Nizam, until his kidneys failed. Evidently, his repeated bouts of urinary infections belied something much more sinister.

Muhammed has been receiving dialysis at the National Kidney Foundation for five years. He has learnt more about his condition and lives an active life in spite of it.

He says: "If I'm not studying, I'm playing in a band or meeting friends. Everyday is a bonus for me."

Having suffered, Muhammed tells his friends to treasure their kidneys. "You don't miss what you have until it's gone," he says.

Kidney disease took its toll on his father and elder sister before it finally hit Chuah Seong Ban, 34. "At first, I started feeling uncomfortable so much so I couldn't sleep at night. One day, both, my kidneys just stopped functioning altogether," he recalls.

Although a professional engineer, Chuah is glad that his company pays for his thrice-weekly dialysis. "The financial burden would be far too much for me to bear, otherwise," he says. Chuah shudders to think of other less fortunate patients if National Kidney Foundation weren't there to them.

Did you know that more than 500 million (or 10% of all adults) worldwide have some form of kidney disease? Or that millions die every year from heart attacks and strokes linked to chronic kidney disease?

Any disease that threatens the kidneys has to be viewed seriously. Chronic kidney disease is especially so as its prevalence is increasing. This is due mainly to the rising number of people with poorly managed diabetes and high blood pressure – the two most major contributing factors for kidney damage today.

Smoking, obesity, advancing age and family history of kidney disease are also other important risk factors to watch.

Undetected or untreated, kidney diseases can lead to end-stage kidney failure. Referring to the complete and utter failure of the kidneys, it is a life-threatening condition and the patient would need a kidney transplant or dialysis to stay alive.

Dialysis, a process to filter the blood, has to be conducted three times a week for the rest of a patient's life. The total cost is often too expensive for most ordinary people to shoulder.

Thankfully, kidney diseases are mostly preventable, especially if one observes a healthy lifestyle.

## Avoiding trouble

Kidneys are important. They process our blood every day to filter out the waste by-products that result when food is broken down in the body. The waste products are then removed from our bodies as urine or stool.

When the kidneys are damaged or weakened by disease, their ability to filter blood is reduced. So, instead of being eliminated, the



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waste products accumulate in the body.

Currently, more than 16,000 Malaysians are on dialysis and this is expected to reach 20,000 by the 2010. Worldwide, the increase in dialysis patients is estimated to grow at 7% per annum.

According to Dr SS Gill, Chairman of Board of Managers of the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) end-stage kidney disease is to be prevented so as to avoid having to go on dialysis.

He stresses: "Care for your kidneys as best as is possible. If you already have diabetes or high blood pressure, control them effectively. Do not let those diseases damage your kidneys."

Those who are in apparently good health should also take heed. NKF Vice-Chairman Prof Dato Dr Zaki Morad Mohamad Zaher says: "We encourage all adults to go for their annual health screening. I'm confident this measure to detect the presence of risk factors and even early stages of kidney disease will effectively help reduce the number of chronic kidney disease cases in Malaysia over the next 15 years."

NKF itself is actively promoting health screening through the NKF LifeCheck programme, launched last month. The Foundation maintains a 40-seater customised bus, equipped with qualified personnel and seven workstations, to offer screening and advisory services to communities and company employees. The response is good and NKF has been receiving more requests for NKF LifeCheck services.

The NKF LifeCheck programme is part of the NKF KIDNEY CARE com-

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DR SS GILL

munity education programme, which is inaugurated today, in conjunction with the 2nd World Kidney Day.

"Early detection and early corrective treatment can slow down the progression to end-stage renal failure by 20% to 50%," says Dr Tan Chwee Choon, NKF 2nd Vice-Chairman. "More importantly, everyone needs to learn about their kidneys and how to care for them. Through NKF KIDNEY CARE, we hope to educate more people through the mass media, publications, events and so forth."

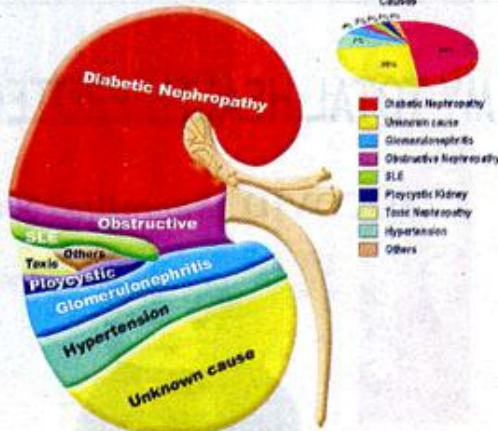
## About the National Kidney Foundation

Dr SS Gill, a pioneer in dialysis treatment in Malaysia, co-founded



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## CAUSES OF KIDNEY FAILURE



**EARLY DETECTION AND TREATMENT OF KIDNEY DISEASE MAY PREVENT THE DEVELOPMENT OF KIDNEY FAILURE**

Malaysia's National Kidney Foundation (NKF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention, early detection and treatment of kidney disease. For more details, please call NKF at 03-7954 9048 or log on to www.nkf.org.my

the National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia (NKF) with the help of the Rotary club in 1969.

With 20 established dialysis centres, NKF is today the foremost non-government organisation in the country working with people having diseases of the kidney. It provides subsidised dialysis treatments and free medications, laboratory tests, follow-ups and welfare assistance.

NKF is also committed to educating the public about the problem and causes of kidney failure, as well as how to prevent kidney diseases.

Gill says: "The community, patients and their families need

non-profit organisations like NKF. However, our effectiveness depends greatly upon the financial support from caring companies and individual donors. You can make a difference by helping NKF help people to care for their kidneys.

■ Article courtesy of NKF Kidney Care, a community education programme by National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia. The public is invited to celebrate World Kidney Day at Amcorp Mall, Petaling Jaya, on Sunday March 16, 2008, from 10.00am to 5.00pm. For more details, please call NKF at 03-7954 9048 or log on to www.nkf.org.my.