

More suffering from kidney failure

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KUALA LUMPUR: More and more Malaysians are suffering from end-stage renal disease, or kidney failure.

The 14th report of the Malaysian Dialysis and Transplant Registry 2006 released recently contains some grim revelations.

There were 15,000 Malaysians on dialysis last year, and the intake of new dialysis patients showed a linear increase over the years from 1,136 in 1997 to 3,152 last year.

It also revealed an alarming trend in the incidence of diabetic nephropathy as a cause of kidney failure — 50 per cent of new dialysis patients last year were diabetic.

But it need not be the case, said Dr Satwant Singh Gill, who is better known as S.S. Gill, the country's first nephrologist.

"The key to prevention is early diagnosis and prompt treatment before damage becomes extensive."

And Dr Gill, 74, called on

Malaysians to seriously heed the government's healthy lifestyle campaign to avert chronic diseases, including kidney failure.

Malaysians, said Dr Gill, must prevent what was preventable, treat what was treatable and prepare for what was inevitable.

Chronic kidney disease is a silent threat. It decreases the organ's ability to perform its vital functions of removing impurities from the blood and regulating blood pressure.

When kidney failure occurs, death is certain unless the patient undergoes regular haemodialysis — blood cleansing with the help of a machine — or receives a transplant.

Chronic kidney disease also increases the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Timely treatment can greatly slow the progression of the disease and delay or prevent the onset of kidney failure.

Chronic kidney disease shows no symptoms in its early stages.

The high risk group includes sufferers of type 1 and type 2 diabetes and high blood



Diabetics form the majority of dialysis patients in the country.

pressure. This group accounts for 70 per cent of chronic kidney disease cases.

As the disease advances, it can produce symptoms such as fatigue, itching, swelling or numbness of the hands or feet,

nausea, vomiting, cramps and difficulty in concentrating.

Dr Gill said if people could control their diabetes and high blood pressure, there was a good chance to prevent chronic kidney disease and keep it

from progressing to kidney failure.

Some 11 per cent of the population, said Dr Gill, have some form of kidney disease — cancer, damage, infection, injury, stones, renal disorder,

urine protein and blood in the urine.

"What we are concerned is diabetic kidney disease which is preventable by keeping blood sugar within the target range."