

Baxter Malaysia News Clipping

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Journalist(s): Nurul Halawati Mohd Azhari	
Headline: Are your kidneys healthy?	

Are Your Kidneys Healthy?**By Nurul Halawati Mohd Azhari**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 11 (Bernama) -- Tomorrow is the World Kidney Day (WKD), commemorated annually since 2006, that serves as a reminder to the public on why Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) should be avoided at all cost.

CKD is a silent disease that afflicts more people than anyone can imagine with one out of 10 adults in the world suffering some form of damage to the kidneys, often mainly due to high blood pressure and diabetes.

In Malaysia, by 2010 the number of patients with CKD is expected to increase to nearly 20,000 compared to 17,000 in year 2007.

These patients generally have reduced life expectancy, face higher risk of heart attacks and blood vessel related diseases as well as sudden deaths.

"It is for this reason that medical experts have categorised kidney diseases as an important independent contributor to cardiac and blood vessel related diseases," said Dr Ghazali Ahmad, the National Advisor and Head of Nephrology Services, Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Senior Consultant and Head, Department of Nephrology, Hospital Kuala Lumpur.

CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASES

Those afflicted by CKD will have to undergo kidney transplant or dialysis if they are to extend their life span.

Currently, the government realising the high cost of dialysis subsidises the cost for the needy patients who qualify under the guidelines set by the MOH.

According to Dr Ghazali, the increase in the number of CKD patients has set new challenges in cost and productivity. The estimated total cost of dialysis treatment in Malaysia in 2007 was nearly RM300 million.

"Assuming that all the patients undergo hemodialysis three times weekly with per session taking up to four hours, the country stands to lose about 13 million man-hours per year. By 2010, the estimated 20,000 patients will need more consultant nephrologists, trained and qualified nurses to perform safe and effective dialysis treatment on them," he added.

The patients will also need more suitable and safe physical space for the treatment to be carried out.

Dr Ghazali noted that while access and funding for dialysis treatment is relatively easy, access to trained manpower remains a great challenge.

IN NEED OF MORE MANPOWER

He pointed out that currently 70 trained kidney specialists nationwide look after more than 400 hemodialysis units, but each specialist would have to take care of an average of 20 patients on regular dialysis at any time.

In addition, these specialists also have to attend to patients with various types of kidney ailments.

"Even if we have unlimited funding for dialysis to pay for every patient, we cannot treat them all. At least not safely and effectively without adequate trained nurses and consultant nephrologists," added Dr Ghazali.

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Hence, the task and thrust of health experts caring after kidney patients have to be revised from just detecting kidney diseases and treating them to preventing kidney diseases in the first place.

PREVENTION BETTER THAN CURE

The bad effects of high blood pressure on the kidneys in persons with diabetes is worse compared to persons suffering from high blood pressure only. In patients with diabetes, the blood pressure problem must be treated beforehand to prevent CKD.

Meanwhile, the National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia (NKF) believes early detection and prevention of kidney disease is the way forward in finding a solution for the alarming rise in the number of new dialysis patients.

NKF's Chairman Dr S.S. Gill noted that the remedy is not in opening up new dialysis centres, but to educate and inform the public to take steps to change their lifestyles and eating habits.

"NKF believes regular health screening for Malaysians is the first step to check on the state of their health.

"Fortunately, we can detect CKD disease early on and detection is easy. Simple, inexpensive test of our urine, blood and blood pressure can show early signs of kidney problems.

"Once we know these problems, we can slow down and even stop the progression to CKD. We can start by taking the right medicine to control blood pressure, improving control of diabetes and changing some of our lifestyle habits," he said.

WORLD KIDNEY DAY 2009

WKD 2009 is celebrated for the fourth year in more than 100 countries across six continents with the purpose of raising awareness on the vital role of our kidneys and to spread the message that CKD is common, harmful and treatable.

This year, the focus is on the importance of kidneys and calls the public to check if they are at risk of kidney ailments. The campaign hopes to raise awareness on the importance of early and comprehensive screening for those in the high risk categories.

This year's theme, Amazing Kidneys "Are Yours Healthy?" reflect the vital role played by the kidneys to filter and clean 200 litres of blood daily as well as to regulate blood pressure. As part of this year's campaign, the tagline "Keep your pressure down" highlights the benefits of better blood pressure control in slowing down the progression of CKD.

The 2009 WKD celebrations in Malaysia is held in collaboration with the NKF, the Malaysian Society of Nephrology (MSN) and MOH with the hope of successfully mobilising members of the public, medical and patient groups to participate in a series of activities planned throughout this month.

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