

## Battling kidney failure with pride

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What doesn't kill you make you stronger.

### FEATURE



Healthy kidneys are needed to remove excess wastes, minerals and fluids from the body. Kidneys also produce hormones to help strengthen bones and cleanse the blood. When a kidney fails, it could result in a build up of wastes and excess fluids which will in turn raise the patient's blood pressure.

Kidney disease does not only affect the body of the patient but also the emotional and mental welfare of the patient. Living with advanced kidney disease can have a serious and negative impact on your quality of life.

Kidney patients often suffer from poor attentiveness, memory lapses and lethargy which limit their ability to work. Diagnosing and treating this disease is also a costly affair – patients have to fork out at least RM30,000 – 40,000 per annum on dialysis and medications alone – without the help of subsidies. On an emotional level, patients can develop a sense of indignity as they become financially and emotionally dependent on their loved ones.

The National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia's Patient Welfare Incentive Fund was set up in the year 2003 with the aim of helping NKF patients with a loan to start a small business venture or a study loan interest free.

The fund aims to help kidney patients secure an occupation which allow them to be gainfully employed and in doing so, regain their sense of confidence and self-esteem as they become self-sufficient.

V Guruparan, aged 24, was diagnosed with kidney failure after his SPM examinations. Fresh out of high school, he was forced to make immediate plans for his future. Guruparan never experience the privilege of college education or the luxury of deciding his career path. Instead, he had to worry endlessly on how his parents were going to afford his medical fees.

"It came as a shock, but we have to deal with it. It was difficult for me to get a job with my condition because I could not cope with the usual 9-5pm working hours as I would need to go for my dialysis treatments," he said.

A Rahman Amir Gani, aged 42 and Roshidi Hashim, aged 46, have also been living with kidney failure for the past few years. Rahman used to own a push cart nasi lemak stall which he needs to move about everyday.

Both men used to earn stable income to support their respective families. However, upon being diagnosed with kidney failure, they have found it difficult to muster the strength and energy needed on a daily basis because they have to go for dialysis treatment three times a week.

"It was easy to get up in the morning, but not so much throughout the day because I would feel so tired and sometimes even black-out from fatigue. I have to go for dialysis treatment three times a week and during that time I would have to take time off work as each treatment will take up four hours! This would result in me losing some of my profits because I could not have my food business open the entire day and also I would be too weak to be pushing my cart out", said En. Rahman.

On the other hand, Roshidi was a sous chef in a well known hotel. He had to give up his job because he was unable to attend to work on a regular basis.

### Kidney disease is avertable

It may seem all doom and gloom but with the Patient Welfare Incentive Fund, patients are able to get a good start at making their own business with the interest free loan.

Having received the Patient Welfare Incentive Fund, Rahman, Roshidi and Guruparan now have their own business.

Rahman has his nasi lemak stall in a permanent location so he need not have to roll out his stall everyday, while Roshidi operates a small café serving Thai cuisine and Guruparan runs his own catering business serving authentic Indian food with his family.



"I'm really thankful for the help NKF has provided me with. At least with my own business now, I won't have to worry so much about how I'm going to look for the money I need for my treatments. The burden on my parents have also been eased a little more," said Guruparan.

According to Chua Hong Wee, CEO of NKF, there are over 24,000 kidney patients in Malaysia with an increase of 4,000 more patients yearly.

Data from the Renal Registry shows that 5% – 8% of the dialysis patients are able to work but are unable to secure jobs due to their conditions leading to a faction of wasted resources. Not to mention, the psychological impact resulting from the feeling of being rejected by society and sometimes even the family.

Associations such as the National Kidney Foundation play a vital role in easing the burden of kidney patients. They provide the facilities, treatments and services made possible through funds raised with the public and organisation.

Each year, expenses totaling about RM40 million is used to help more than 1,450 patients at their 25 dialysis centres nationwide.

Out of all the health issues that can affect the public, kidney disease is avertable. For early detection and prevention; get a health screening, for this simple act might just save your life.

For further information on NKF, their services and how you can help, please visit <http://www.nkf.org.my> or call 03-7954 9048.

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