

Adjusting to life on dialysis

A patient talks about her life-changing experience after being diagnosed with kidney failure

WHEN she was pregnant with her daughter, Chew Keng Poh was diagnosed with diabetes. She was 23. After giving birth, the disease seemed to be under control.

Although she has to live with the disease, Chew tried to live a normal life, taking care of her daughter and husband.

Early last year however, her right leg swelled up and a sore on her right thigh eventually infected her right toe. Her daughter took Chew to a private clinic to have her condition treated. Unfortunately, the news was not good — Chew was suffering from chronic kidney failure and had to have her toe amputated.

She was then referred to the Tengku Ampuan Rahimah hospital in Klang where further tests were conducted. It was confirmed that she had chronic kidney disease (CKD) —

her kidneys were no longer able to remove waste from the blood and regulate fluid levels. This resulted in the build-up of toxins in Chew's blood which led to the other complications she had experienced.

"They told me immediately that I would have to have my toe amputated. They also said that they would have to begin serious treatment for my sore and swollen foot, as well as undergo dialysis. I didn't know what to say or think. All I felt was that my whole world as I knew it had collapsed," said Chew, 49.

A second opinion from Universiti Malaya Medical Centre confirmed the initial diagnosis.

The news was devastating for Chew as she could not bear the thought of having her husband and daughter look after her.

But her family was practical and proceeded to act in her best interest, within their financial means.

Chew's toe was amputated as she underwent treatment for the swelling and sore in her leg. She was also required to undergo dialysis three times a week which she started in June.

DIALYSIS TREATMENT

The commute between Klang and UMMC for weekly dialysis sessions soon became a burden for Chew and

her family.

She was referred to Pusat Dialisis NKF Bakti in Klang, where she would undergo subsequent dialysis treatment funded by the National Kidney Foundation Malaysia. This move reduced her commute as well as costs associated with her treatment.

She is learning to live with the condition but everything has changed for Chew.

"Prior to my condition, it was easy for me to cook and do household chores. But now, I tire easily and find it doing chores difficult. What's even sadder is that my husband has had to quit his job to look after me and help with the cooking, cleaning and other household duties," she said.

Chew and her husband now depend on their daughter, who works as a kindergarten teacher, for financial support. The family doesn't receive financial assistance from friends and relatives as they too are not well-to-do.

"It is disheartening to be financially dependent on our daughter, when she should be pursuing better things in life for herself. As a parent, my only wish for her is that she does well in life and I hope she will get married one day and raise a family," said Chew.

Chew does not socialise as much



*Chew has to go for **dialysis treatment three times a week.***

as she used to with her neighbours and friends. She no longer travels, something that she loved to do. Now, she takes life one day at a time and is thankful for her friends and loved ones who have stood by her through her ordeal.

Chew's condition is a stark reminder that anyone can suffer from CKD.

Often, as in her case, it can be a life-changing ailment and kidney patients require all the support and assistance they can get.