

It can happen to anyone

PETALING JAYA — As a 13-year-old student, things were going well for Shasaindran Thanapalasingam. Besides enjoying good camaraderie with his peers, he was also an avid sportsman and even ran for his school. However, an unfortunate turn of events one day changed the course of his life.

On that day while eating, Shasaindran began vomiting blood. He was rushed to the nearest private hospital, where medical staff ran a series of clinical tests on him.

The diagnosis was not good. He was found to have shrunken kidneys, and was diagnosed with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD), a condition characterised by the gradual loss of kidney function over time.

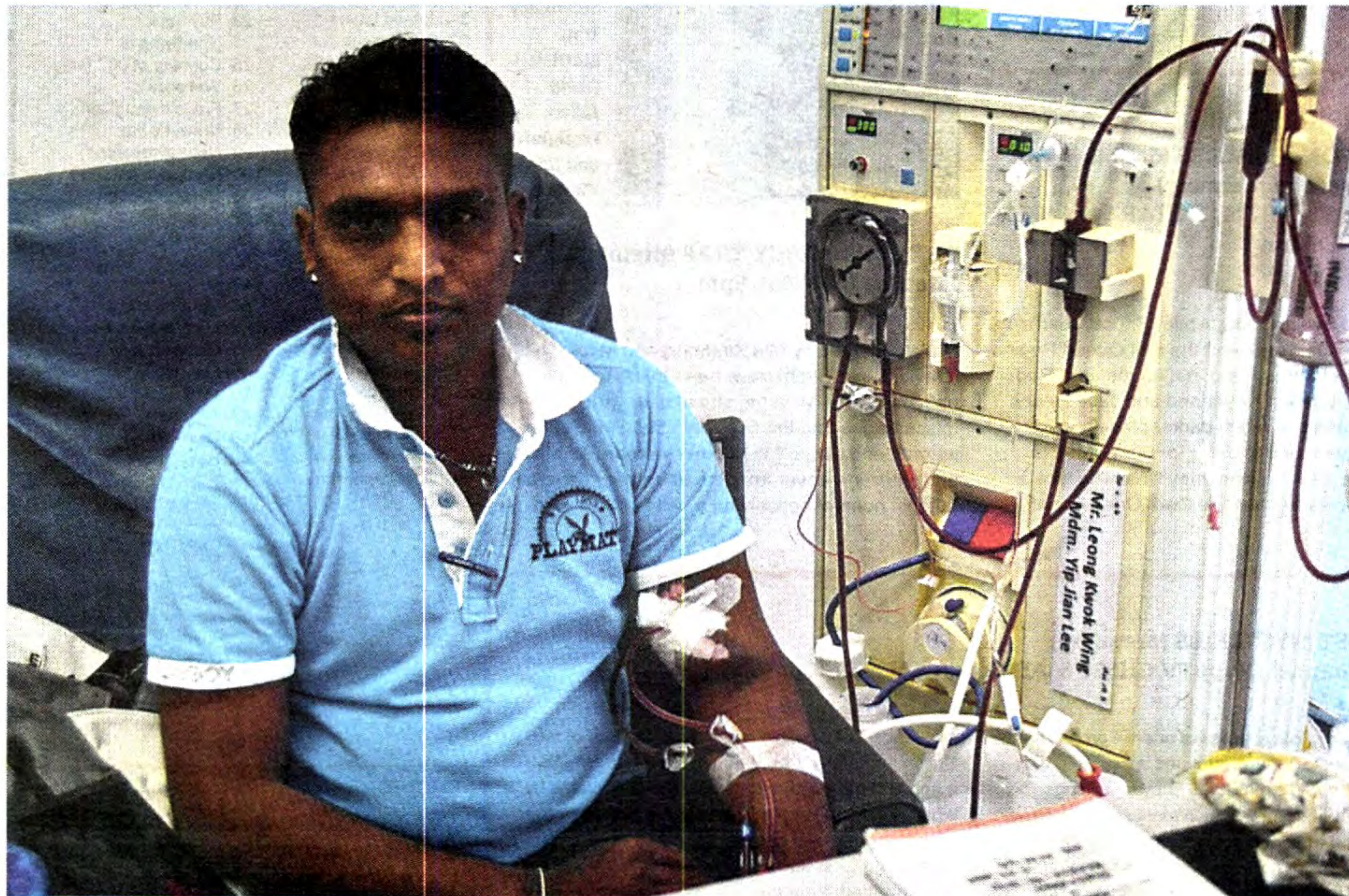
His kidneys, an essential organ for the removal of waste from the blood while regulating water fluid levels, were failing. This also resulted in the build-up of toxins in his blood, which could lead to other complications.

“My parents were devastated,” says Shasaindran, who is now 28 years old. “They were more devastated than I was, as I was too young at that time to comprehend the seriousness of the situation.

“But my parents knew the months — even the years ahead — would be tough. They told me I wouldn’t be able to run anymore, which I really enjoyed. That itself was depressing for me.”

Shasaindran has been undergoing dialysis treatment three times a week over the last four years. Financing these treatments posed a challenge for Shasaindran, who lives with his mother in a low-cost flat. His family survived on his meagre wage as a car park attendant and his mother’s subsistence assistance from Socso.

“It was very sad indeed. It was me who contracted the disease, but the burden affected my family as well. For me, that was far worse than the fact



If not for NKF, I don't know how I would have survived, says Shasaindran. — Picture courtesy of Go Communications

that I was diagnosed with CKD,” recalls Shasaindran.

Thankfully for him, the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) of Malaysia eventually learnt of his plight, and helped cover the expenses of his dialysis treatment.

“If not for NKF, I don’t know how I would have survived. This was a great help, and I am truly grateful. The staff look after me very well. They are polite, caring, and treat all patients with respect. Even the dietician approaches me to advise me on my food intake. Their care is quite comprehensive and they even organise yearly activities for

patients,” says Shasaindran.

Though he is not completely out of the woods, things are slowly beginning to look up for Shasaindran. He still undergoes dialysis. Following two failed kidney transplants, he is now looking forward and prays hard for a third, successful operation.

He does the best he can and has high hopes for the future. Having already obtained a diploma in Business Administration, he hopes to start a profitable car park business.

“My ordeal has only built my character even more, and has made me a stronger person today. I urge other

people out there to maintain a healthy diet and physical exercise and take good care of their kidneys. I am proof that kidney disease does not discriminate. It can happen to anyone.”

• National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia

The National Kidney Foundation (NKF) Malaysia is a non-profit charitable organisation dedicated to helping Malaysians suffering from end stage kidney failure who lack access to or cannot afford dialysis treatment. NKF currently has over 1,600 dialysis patients receiving subsidised dialysis treatment in 28 dialysis centres nationwide.