

# Higher risk at illegal centres

## 'Doing dialysis there lowers survival rate'

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**PETALING JAYA:** The survival rate of patients is less than 50% after one year of dialysing in some unlicensed haemodialysis centres.

This is much lower than the national average of more than 80%, said a senior nephrologist.

"We do not have details as to why this is happening but we are concerned," said the nephrologist, who declined to be named. He was responding to a report in *The Star* on Tuesday of the Health Ministry's plan to close down – in stages – haemodialysis centres which did not meet requirements.

The report quoted National Kidney Foundation chairman Datuk Dr Zaki Morad as urging the ministry to approve applications for haemodialysis centres in rural areas.

Consultant nephrologist Dr Ong Loke Meng, said he was not aware of any centre with a less than 50% survival rate but, he said, some centres with a high death rate might have taken older and very ill patients.

He said the Health Ministry had, in the past, temporarily suspended centres where the patients were found to have contracted

Hepatitis C. Deputy Health director-general Datuk Dr S. Jeyaindran said that the ministry was clamping down hard on centres that did not meet the requirements.

He said to make it easy for patients to check the approval status of any centre, the ministry was coming up with certificates with serial numbers that will be displayed at haemodialysis centres.

He said currently, the centres were only issued letters of approval.

Dr Jeyaindran also said that the ministry would focus more on peritoneal dialysis (PD) treatment than setting up new haemodialysis centres to make treatment more accessible to patients, especially those in rural areas.

"We are not in favour of having more haemodialysis centres because we already have an excess of capacity and they are also more expensive to maintain," he said.

Meanwhile, the Penang Welfare, Caring Society and Environment Committee chairman Phee Boon Poh said it had obtained all the necessary approvals for the state's CAT Dialysis Centre at the Balik Pulau market complex.

The centre is said to be the first state-run dialysis centre in the country.

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