

2.5m suffer from kidney disease

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KUALA LUMPUR: Some 2.5 million Malaysians have some form of kidney disease – and it is no thanks to their unhealthy lifestyle and eating habits.

This figure could just be the tip of the iceberg, especially with the nation seeing an alarming increase in Malaysians suffering from non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, obesity, hypertension, heart diseases and high cholesterol.

National Kidney Foundation's (NKF) board of directors chairman, Datuk Dr Zaki Morad Mohd Zaher, said the NKF was now on a mission to educate people on the disease and also to get those in the high-risk group to go for health screening for early detection of the disease.

“We have been conducting public health education activities for many years and even our mobile teams go around to do screening on individuals at risk of kidney disease,” he told theSun, adding that those who are at high risk are people suffering from diabetes, high blood pressure, family history of kidney disease and those with history of kidney stones.

At present, there are about 30,000 people on dialysis and the number is increasing by about 5,000 to 6,000 each year.

Every year, about 10% of dialysis patients die due to lack of organ donors.

Zaki Morad said the NKF spent about RM25 million a year to finance haemodialysis treatment for about 1,600 patients in 28 centres located in all states except Negri Sembilan and Malacca.

“Not all of the RM25 million comes from NKF as the government contributes about one-third of the cost of the dialysis and the patients pay some amount (not more than RM50),” he said.

NKF opens two to three centres each year, especially in states like Sabah, Sarawak, Kelantan, Kedah and Terengganu.

Zaki Morad said the foundation needs at least about RM1 million to start a new centre and a few million more each year to conduct its screening and education programmes.

The most common cause of kidney failure in the adult population is diabetes and nearly 60% of all new patients accepted for dialysis are diabetics.