



TOWARDS HEALTHIER KIDNEYS

Aussie duo's motorcycle ride to Paris
to raise funds for renal disease research

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KUALA LUMPUR: When his son was born with hypoplastic (under-developed) kidney disease in April last year, French-born Australian Stephane Etienne (*pic*) decided to do something about it by setting up the WorldRiderz Foundation to raise funds for medical research on kidney diseases. His son, Ilhan, is now 17 months old.

On July 24 at the Sydney Children's Hospital, Etienne, 34, bid farewell to his wife, Capucine, and their infant son Ilhan, to embark on a fund-raising 30,000km motorcycle ride with, Canadian-born Australian Paul Torriero, that will take them on a trans-continental

journey through 11 countries across Australia, Asia, Africa and Europe before ending in Paris, France.

Both are riding modified KTM 990 Adventure high-powered bikes and their mission is also to create greater global awareness for chronic kidney diseases (CKD).

Etienne and Torriero, 44, who are also surfing partners, are now in Malaysia on a nine-day visit. Yesterday, they stopped by the National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia (NKF) secretariat building in Petaling Jaya, accompanied by 30 local bikers from Extreme Freedom Bike Club of Kuala Lumpur, where they were welcomed by NKF chairman Datuk Dr Zaki Morad Mohd Zaher and his board of directors.

"There is not much awareness of CKD. Even on the Internet, there's a lack of websites for CKD patients and their families to share experiences and give support. Through WorldRiderz Foundation, we want more people around the world to know about CKD, also through the help of Discovery Networks Asia Pacific," said Etienne.

"Three months before my return from Paris, I will start a Global Renal Network website to serve as a platform for kidney disease researchers, patients and their families to share their experiences and opinions."

He said funds collected from various sponsorships and individuals would go to the Sydney Children's Hospital which is a world leader

in paediatric renal and urological treatment.

The duo leave tomorrow for India where they plan to meet the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama. They will continue their travels to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Italy, Morocco, Spain and finally, France.

Discovery Networks are documenting Etienne and Torriero's journey into a six-part reality adventure series to be aired by the Discovery channels in Australia and Asia next year.

Dr Zaki Morad said CKD symptoms were hard to detect and those afflicted were only aware of it during the late stages of the disease.

"CKD is a silent killer and often people die of it before they are able

to receive treatment. Those with a family history of kidney diseases should go for regular medical tests as it is essential to detect the ailment at an early stage," he said.

"Kidney disease patients are required to undergo dialysis for a couple of days each week, and it is expensive and time-consuming. Most patients become easily stressed as they have to undergo regular therapy and we have found a patient's family members also face stress."

He said Malaysia now has 20,000 patients on dialysis.

"With greater awareness of kidney diseases, more people will realise the importance of leading healthier lifestyles, so that in the long-term there will be less people stricken by it."