

# 'Prioritise patients with chronic kidney disease for Covid-19 inoculation'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The government has been urged to give priority for Covid-19 inoculation to patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD).

Giving vaccination priority to the group would reduce overcrowding at the Health Ministry's haemodialysis centres.

The move could also help return haemodialysis centres in the private sector and those run by non-governmental organisations to normalcy, said the National Kidney Foundation, Malaysian Society of Nephrology and Malaysian Society of Transplantation in a joint statement yesterday.

The statement by National Kidney Foundation chairman Datuk Dr Zaki Morad, Malaysian Society of Nephrology president Professor Dr Abdul Halim Abdul Gafor and Malaysian Society of Transplantation president Dr Rosnawati

Yahya said: "We now know that the government will start vaccination against the virus soon. We hope the Health Ministry will give special priority to the patients with CKD."

They urged for priority to be given to the following groups:

**PATIENTS** on haemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis;

**PATIENTS** with functioning kidney transplants;

**HEALTHCARE** workers directly attending to haemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis patients;

**FAMILY** members of haemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis or kidney transplant patients; and,

**PATIENTS** with CKD Stage 3 to 4 (pre-dialysis).

The medical practitioners said they were concerned about the impact of Covid-19 infection on patients with CKD, especially those with CKD Stage 5 who were

receiving treatment with dialysis or require a kidney transplant.

"Experience worldwide has shown this group of patients are very vulnerable to serious complications of Covid-19 infection and there is significant mortality among those infected.

"Similarly, there is an increased risk of healthcare workers attending to these patients acquiring this infection due to frequent encounters," the statement said.

They said there were now about 50,000 patients living on dialysis or patients who had a functioning kidney transplant in the country, with the vast majority of them on haemodialysis.

They said these patients had impaired immunity either from their illness or induced by medications, making them eminently vulnerable to complications.

They said the financial impact

of Covid-19 infections on kidney patients, their family, haemodialysis centres' management and the centres' staff could be huge.

"There are tests for the virus to be done, PPEs (personal protective equipment) to be donned, and the affected centre has to be sanitised.

"The emotional strain on patients and staff once a centre has an infected patient is unmeasurable."

They thanked the Health Ministry's nephrologists and their haemodialysis units for accepting most infected haemodialysis patients from private and NGO haemodialysis centres.

They said patients who are on haemodialysis and the staff of centres looking after them were also particularly vulnerable.

"They stay in a confined space for long hours and any undetect-

ed infection amongst them can have disastrous consequences."

Haemodialysis centres currently were required to follow stringent guidelines set by national and international bodies to prevent cross infection, they said.

They said haemodialysis staff were specialised nurses and if infected by Covid-19, they would have to be quarantined, thus reducing the centre's capability to look after patients as these nurses were not readily replaceable.

"We are happy to assist the Health Ministry in the vaccination programme.

"The National Renal Registry of the Malaysian Society of Nephrology and National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia can assist in disseminating information as well as assist the ministry in scheduling vaccinations."