

2nd June 2025

Kidney Health on the Global Stage: A Historic WHA Resolution Signals New Hope for Malaysia

In a landmark move, the 78th World Health Assembly (WHA78) formally adopted a groundbreaking [resolution on reducing the burden of kidney disease](#) on 23 May 2025—a milestone that has been applauded by healthcare organisations worldwide, including the National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia (NKF).

The resolution marks the first time kidney health has been formally prioritised within the World Health Organization (WHO)'s non-communicable disease (NCD) agenda, and aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 3.4 (reducing premature mortality from NCDs) and Target 3.8 (achieving universal health coverage). The resolution is not only symbolic—it carries far-reaching implications for Malaysia, where kidney disease has become a silent but pressing public health crisis.

This resolution is not just symbolic—it holds **far-reaching implications for Malaysia**, where chronic kidney disease (CKD) continues to escalate as a critical public health issue.

A Historic Week at WHA78

The adoption of the resolution on **23 May 2025** at WHA78 was the culmination of years of global advocacy, led by the **International Society of Nephrology (ISN)** and supported by a wide coalition of healthcare professionals and non-state actors.

Kidney disease has long been overshadowed by other NCDs, despite its deep links to diabetes and hypertension. The **COVID-19 pandemic** further exposed the fragility of health systems, particularly for patients with chronic diseases, and highlighted the need for kidney care to be integrated into **universal health coverage and emergency preparedness plans**.

ISN stepped up global engagement in the lead-up to WHA78, pushing for kidney health to be recognised as a central pillar in both **NCD management and economic resilience**. Under **Agenda Item 13.1**, ISN presented a joint constituency statement endorsed by **seven WHO-recognised non-state actors**, a significant milestone in health diplomacy.

ISN also co-hosted a policy forum with **Devex**, titled *“Kidney Health Matters: A Policy Imperative for Economic Resilience.”* ISN President **Professor Marcello Tonelli** warned that without urgent action, kidney disease could overwhelm healthcare systems and derail sustainable development efforts.

Head Office

70, Jalan 14/29, 46100
Petaling Jaya Selangor Darul
Ehsan, Malaysia
Tel +603-7954 9048 Fax +603-7957 7328
www.nkf.org.my

NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION OF MALAYSIA Regd.No.PPM-002-10-12021969

YAYASAN BUAH PINGGANG KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA

馬來西亞腎臟基金會

மலேசிய தேசிய சிறுநீரக அறநிறுவனம்

A Growing Health Crisis in Malaysia

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) is rising at an alarming rate in the country. Between 2011 and 2018, the prevalence of CKD among Malaysian adults increased from **9.07% to 15.48%**. Yet, only **5% of individuals** with CKD are aware of their condition. This lack of awareness results in late diagnoses, often requiring complex and costly interventions.

Cases of **End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD)** are also increasing rapidly. Each year, over **10,000 Malaysians** are newly diagnosed as requiring renal replacement therapy. Today, more than **50,000 people** are on dialysis in Malaysia—a number projected to **double to over 106,000 by 2040** if meaningful interventions are not implemented.

NKF's Multi-Pillar Response

In light of this growing crisis, NKF has developed a strategy built around four key pillars:

1. Providing quality dialysis treatment through its 32 centres nationwide.
2. Implementing holistic prevention programmes, focused on early detection and lifestyle changes.
3. Advocating for improved kidney care policies and active engagement with government and private stakeholders.
4. Mobilising sustainable funding to support underprivileged patients, especially from the B40 income group.

Through community outreach, NKF offers **free health screenings**, public education campaigns, and targeted interventions. Many of NKF's dialysis patients come from financially vulnerable backgrounds, and their treatments are **highly subsidised or fully sponsored**—thanks to the generosity of the Malaysian public and corporate donors.

Implications for Malaysia

The momentum from WHA78 presents a powerful opportunity for Malaysia to **reassess and strengthen its kidney care strategy**.

“The call for equitable and sustainable financing in the recent World Health Assembly resolution underscores the urgent need for universal access to kidney care, particularly for underserved communities like in rural Sabah, Sarawak, and among the B40 groups,” said Y.Bhg. Dato’ Dr. Zaki Morad bin Mohd Zaher, Chairman of the National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia.

Head Office

70, Jalan 14/29, 46100
Petaling Jaya Selangor Darul
Ehsan, Malaysia
Tel +603-7954 9048 Fax +603-7957 7328
www.nkf.org.my

NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION OF MALAYSIA Regd.No.PPM-002-10-12021969

YAYASAN BUAH PINGGANG KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA

馬來西亞腎臟基金會

மலேசிய தேசிய சிறுநீரக அறநிறுவனம்

“We are hopeful that this global commitment will inspire the Malaysian government to enhance support through increased funding, expanded insurance coverage, and improved infrastructure. This includes greater investment in peritoneal dialysis, kidney transplantation, and early-stage interventions to slow the progression of kidney disease.”

What's Next?

With effective implementation, the WHA78 resolution could catalyse sweeping reforms in Malaysia's kidney health landscape. Potential benefits include:

- Stronger national prevention programmes and early screening initiatives.
 - Broader access to **affordable dialysis and kidney transplantation**, especially for B40 groups.
 - Investment in workforce development—training more **nephrologists and dialysis nurses**.
 - Cross-sector collaboration involving government, NGOs, private sector, and communities.
 - Increased resource allocation for infrastructure and long-term service delivery.
 - Enhanced equity in patient care, ensuring **no one is denied treatment** due to financial hardship or location.
 - Better data collection and research systems to support **evidence-based policy-making**.
-

A Shared Responsibility

NKF extends its deep appreciation to all stakeholders—locally and globally—who championed this resolution and continue to support the kidney care agenda. NKF remains committed to working with the Malaysian government and international partners to ensure that **no patient is left behind**.

“This resolution reinforces our mission,” said Dr. Zaki. “But more importantly, it invites every sector—from health authorities to civil society—to be part of a united response. We urge all Malaysians to support efforts that make life-saving kidney treatment more accessible and equitable.”

As the **ripple effects of WHA78** begin to unfold, Malaysia stands at a turning point. This is a golden opportunity to lead by example—demonstrating that equitable kidney care is not only a health priority, but also a **moral and economic imperative**.

Head Office

70, Jalan 14/29, 46100
Petaling Jaya Selangor Darul
Ehsan, Malaysia
Tel +603-7954 9048 Fax +603-7957 7328
www.nkf.org.my

NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION OF MALAYSIA Regd.No.PPM-002-10-12021969

YAYASAN BUAH PINGGANG KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA

馬來西亞腎臟基金會

மலேசிய தேசிய சிறுநீரக அறநிறுவனம்

About the National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia

Established in 1969, the National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia (NKF) is dedicated to promoting kidney health and supporting patients with kidney disease. Through treatment, education, and advocacy, NKF strives to improve the quality of life for those affected by kidney ailments across Malaysia.

Currently, NKF operates **23 dialysis centres** nationwide, providing life-saving treatment to more than **1,700 patients**.

About the International Society of Nephrology (ISN)

The International Society of Nephrology (ISN) is a global not-for-profit organisation dedicated to advancing kidney health worldwide. With over **10,000 members** and partnerships in more than **160 countries**, ISN works to improve kidney disease care through education, research, advocacy, and capacity building. It plays a key role in shaping global health policy and promoting equitable access to kidney care.

Source: International Society of Nephrology (ISN). "Kidney Disease and the Global Health Agenda." Retrieved from <https://www.theisn.org/in-action/advocacy/kidney-disease-and-the-global-health-agenda>

Head Office

70, Jalan 14/29, 46100
Petaling Jaya Selangor Darul
Ehsan, Malaysia
Tel +603-7954 9048 Fax +603-7957 7328
www.nkf.org.my

NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION OF MALAYSIA Regd.No.PPM-002-10-12021969

YAYASAN BUAH PINGGANG KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA

馬來西亞腎臟基金會

மலேசிய தேசிய சிறுநீரக அறநிறுவனம்