This young lady faced her challenges with strength, courage and optimism despite being diagnosed with kidney failure.

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Standing strong... against all odds

Ms Lim Sze Hui embarked on a new business venture and harboured hopes for a good future as she wished to provide for her family, that was until she was diagnosed with kidney failure in October 2011.

It was hard to imagine that someone young and athletic like her would be stricken with kidney failure at the tender age of 22, especially when she had no family history of the illness. However, prior to her diagnosis, Sze Hui found out she was anaemic during a check-up in her Polytechnic days. In addition, she ate out most of the time when she started working. She did not really take care of her health and often felt tired and had poor appetite.

Sze Hui and her family have had their fair share of trials and tribulations. Her brother was afflicted with leukaemia, whose treatment put a financial strain on the family. With her illness, her family faced further financial woes. In addition, her father was later diagnosed with diabetes. As if things could not get any worse, she had to give up her business and had difficulties finding a job.

Taking it in her stride

Despite all these setbacks, Sze Hui took her illness in her stride and bravely sought treatment. Her renal coordinator at her attending hospital recommended her to NKF and soon after, she underwent pre-dialysis education at the hospital, where nurses shared the pros and cons of both haemodialysis and home-based peritoneal dialysis (PD) with her before choosing her preferred modality. She eventually chose to undergo PD.

“I chose to do PD because I could just carry it out at night without having to travel to a dialysis centre and no needles were needed,” explained Sze Hui, who is currently on Automated Peritoneal Dialysis (APD), where her catheter is connected to a cycler for 10 hours, performing PD exchanges for her while she sleeps every night.

NKF supporting her all the way

When she found out that dialysis was costly, Sze Hui was worried that she could not cope with the financial burden. Fortunately, NKF heavily subsidises her dialysis fees and she only pays $50 out-of-pocket for her PD supplies.

“I’m grateful to all the people who support NKF so that patients like me can receive affordable treatment and lead fulfilling lives,” said Sze Hui.

Tracy, an NKF PD nurse visits her at her home once every three months to assess her proficiency in PD and provide advice, care and support.

“Tracy helps to counsel and guide me, giving me the confidence to manage PD on my own,” added Sze Hui.

Tracy is part of the team of nurses from NKF’s Peritoneal Dialysis Community Support Programme who conduct regular visits to boost the confidence of patients in terms of self-care and facilitate early identification of PD-related problems so that patients receive timely intervention.

Currently, Sze Hui is working as a financial consultant where her bosses are very understanding towards her situation. With a steady job and help from NKF, Sze Hui, now 24, is hopeful about her future. She wants to excel in her career, so that she can support her family and, at the same time, effectively advise her clients on appropriate insurance plans as she can better relate to them, given her own circumstances.

Sze Hui had this advice for others. “No matter how busy you are, always make an effort to maintain a healthy lifestyle, exercise and avoid oily food.”
A day of double celebration on 7 April 2013. Not only was it NKF’s 44th year (to the day) we were established to give Life and Hope to kidney patients, but fittingly, it was also the Official Opening of our 25th Dialysis Centre at Tampines - a centre which will give renewed life to another 132 needy patients.

The Wong Sui Ha Edna – NKF Dialysis Centre was made possible with a legacy gift of $4.75 million by one of our donors, the late Madam Wong Sui Ha Edna. Around $1.84 million went towards building and equipping the centre with the rest going towards the recurrent operating costs.

The centre, at Blk 271, Tampines Street 21, has 22 dialysis stations and is NKF’s second in Tampines to meet the increasing demand of dialysis places in the eastern part of Singapore.

Guest-of-Honour at the event was Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Education and special guest was Mr Mah Bow Tan, MP for Tampines GRC and Adviser to Tampines Grassroots Organisations.

The late Madam Wong was a compassionate and humble person, always generous to others, especially the needy in society. The youngest of eight children, she witnessed one of her brothers grapple with kidney failure and donated regularly towards the cause of kidney patients.

It is caring people like the late Madam Wong who make a positive difference in the lives of those who are sick and financially burdened. This dialysis centre is a manifestation of Madam Wong’s selfless giving to humanity.
Enhancing Support for Home-based Dialysis

22% of newly admitted NKF kidney failure patients choose Peritoneal Dialysis (PD) currently, which is carried out at home as an alternative to haemodialysis where patients have to travel to a dialysis centre. NKF hopes to push this figure to 30 – 35% through its on-going efforts to promote PD.

As such, NKF launched the PD Community Support Programme, where trained and experienced PD nurses from NKF work closely with the hospitals to support PD patients and their caregivers by conducting regular home visits to ensure good PD self-management and provide advice and care.

With effect from 1 May 2013, NKF extended social and medical welfare benefits for PD patients which include free basic blood tests, the provision of basic food necessities through its Grains of Hope programme, house painting and befriending services by volunteers, access to NKF’s exercise and fitness programme and simple renovations to improve hygiene conditions where necessary.

This was announced by NKF’s chairman, Mr Koh Poh Tiong at the official opening of the Wong Sui Ha Edna - NKF Dialysis Centre on 7 April 2013 in Tampines.

NKF’s 25 dialysis centres are running at a near full capacity with an average utilisation rate of more than 90 per cent. With an expected increase of kidney patients of about 4 per cent per year, we will have to cater for some 1,000 new patients by 2020.

This means NKF will have to add capacity by building another eight dialysis centres and extend our existing facilities to the best of our abilities. Each new dialysis centre will cost about $2 million to build with an annual operating cost of about $1.5 to $2 million per centre. This works out to almost $32 million for the establishment and operations of the eight new dialysis centres by 2020.

As such, there is greater emphasis on promoting PD, which is just as good as haemodialysis. However, kidney patients lack confidence in taking up PD because they may feel that there is no help with them during dialysis unlike treatment at a dialysis centre.

The visits will facilitate confidence and early identification of PD-related problems so that patients receive timely intervention.

Since the home visits started in June 2011 till April 2013, 404 patients have benefited from this support services with more than 1,400 visits conducted.

With the extended support given to PD patients, NKF will continue to strengthen our support system for PD patients so that it will be a viable and attractive option for effective renal therapy.

“A lot of people feel that because they are doing it at home, they’re on their own. The purpose of the home visits is to try and dispel some of the myths and misunderstanding about peritoneal dialysis, and to basically give them the confidence to help themselves.”

– Associate Professor Evan Lee, Senior Director, Clinical Services, NKF.

How does PD work?
- A PD catheter is inserted permanently at the abdomen
- The catheter is used to fill and drain PD solution into and out of the abdominal cavity, which is surrounded by the peritoneal membrane
- The volume of the PD solution used is approximately 2L
- The 2L PD solution is allowed to dwell in the abdomen cavity for four to six hours (Dwell Time) after filling
- The peritoneal membrane filters waste and fluids from the blood into the PD solution during the dwell time
- After that, the ‘used’ PD solution is drained out and replaced with another 2L fresh PD solution (Exchange)

Advantages of PD
- No need for vascular access and needling as compared to haemodialysis, reducing vascular access-related complications
- Home-based therapy allows patients more flexibility and improves their quality of life
- Gentler and works more like the natural kidney
Improving Patients' Well-being

NKF’s Patients’ Active Day on 24 March 2013 saw 400 patients and caregivers as well as staff and volunteers participating in the event.

Themed “You are Sports-fit”, the event included exciting activities such as mass aerobics, Inter Dialysis Centre and Zone Challenges and games to improve patients’ well-being. It was certainly a day of fun, laughter and bonding for all!

“I’ve joined Patients’ Active Day for 7 years and will continue to do so because I get to play new games like football and basketball which I’ve never tried before.”
– Mr Wong Kwa Seng, Clementi dialysis centre

“It’s so fun to be outdoors doing exercises and playing games and breathing in fresh air! I will definitely participate in Patients’ Active Day again because it’s fun and good for my health and I get to have an enjoyable time with fellow patients.”
– Ms Goh, Kim Keat dialysis centre

National Team paddlers, accompanied by Er Dr Lee Bee Wah, Member of Parliament for Nee Soon GRC and President of Singapore Table Tennis Association (STTA), took time off to visit NKF patients at its dialysis centre in Kim Keat on 2 May 2013 before they set off for two major competitions, the Commonwealth Table Tennis Championships and World Table Tennis Championships.

During the visit, NKF patients witnessed a spectacular ‘live’ exhibition match performance by Singapore’s Olympic stars including Feng Tianwei and Gao Ning and also had a playing session with them.

NKF’s chairman, Mr Koh Poh Tiong said, “We’re delighted and honoured that Singapore Table Tennis Association took time to visit our patients. At NKF, we believe in helping our patients develop a positive mindset and improving their physical and psychological well-being through group activities such as mass exercise workouts and sports challenges like table tennis.”

The visit from these stars indeed raised our patients’ spirits and made it a truly memorable and enjoyable time for them.

Er Dr Lee Bee Wah, MP for Nee Soon GRC and President of STTA said at the event opening, “Every year, STTA has made arrangements for our National Team paddlers to do outreach programmes as well as community service to the less fortunate. We strongly believe that these visits not only allow our players to interact and reach out directly to the local community but most importantly, it provides our paddlers with the valuable opportunity to give back and experience the diversity of our local community.”
Since 2006, NKF has been organising dialysis centre open house events regularly where members of the public can see first-hand the set up of a dialysis centre and learn more about kidney failure and kidney disease prevention.

On 5 May 2013, NKF organised an Open House at the Singapore Buddhist Welfare Services – NKF Dialysis Centre in Hougang and the NKF Hong Kah Dialysis Centre in Jurong West. Mr Chen Show Mao, MP for Aljunied GRC and Mr Desmond Lee, MP for Jurong GRC, attended the event at Hougang and Hong Kah respectively.

Highlights of the Open House included dialysis centre tours, free health screenings and health talks on the leading causes of kidney failure. There were also fun activities for children like kite-painting and colouring and health quizzes. Dietitians were also on hand to provide tips on how to make informed healthier food choices. As part of International Hand Hygiene Day which falls on 5 May every year, there were also booths to educate staff and the community about the importance of infection prevention through hand hygiene.

The events were well attended by residents in Hougang and Hong Kah, creating awareness on kidney disease prevention and encouraging people of all ages to take care of their health.

What is Sodium?
Sodium is a type of mineral which is essential to maintain a proper fluid balance in and around the cells in our body. Salt, which contains 40% of sodium, is commonly found in sauces, condiments, preservatives and preserved and canned foods.

Where can I find Sodium?
- Present naturally in food
- Added during processing by food manufacturer
- Added when we cook
- Added at the table when we eat

Why do we need to control the intake?
- Too much sodium will result in high blood pressure and lead to kidney failure and stroke
- If you are on dialysis it could increase your interdialytic weight gain (IDWG) which is fluid overload

Recommended daily sodium limit
- Less than 1 teaspoon of salt each day (<2000mg sodium)
- Salt is an acquired taste and the taste can be unlearned
Hurry! Limited HOT SEATS Left!

NKF kidney patients undergo dialysis thrice weekly, each time for four hours. Take part in NKF’s Sit-A-Thon by sitting on a stool for four hours to have a glimpse of the plight faced by kidney patients. You will engage in different challenges while sitting!

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Guest-of-Honour
Mr Chan Chun Sing
Acting Minister for Social and Family Development

For more information, visit www.nkfs.org or call 6299 0200.