



April 2018

connect

A new lease of life

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Foreword

Thank you for your care and compassion for our needy kidney patients.

The road to save the lives of kidney patients has been a long and arduous one as we approach the threshold of our 50th anniversary next year. Even more so for our patients who are determined to live on despite their struggles, pain and sufferings as a consequence of a debilitating and crippling disease – kidney failure.

It is therefore important that we remain unrelenting in promoting kidney transplant as it offers the best long term survival and quality of life, in particular living-donor transplant. The transplanted kidney can substitute almost fully the lost functions of the failed kidneys and it usually begins to function right away, thus allowing the patient to lead a normal life. For the kidney donor, he or she can continue to lead a normal and healthy life, just as before the transplant.

One such person whose life has been transformed because of a kidney transplant is Mr Aaron Tay when his younger brother gave him a kidney. Please read his story in our  **Cover Feature**. Aaron's determination to beat the odds and make the most of his new lease of life will inspire you.

We also cover the story of peritoneal dialysis patient Mr Peh Chiu Guan in  **A Closer Look** and how he enjoys the freedom that comes with choosing this home-based treatment. He undergoes his dialysis at night in the comfort of his home while he sleeps, thus enabling him to work in the day and contribute to his family's needs.

While we do more for kidney patients, it is vital that we continue to press forward and adopt the "upstream" approach to retard the progression of kidney failure. In this regard, NKF has been working closely with the community to set up kidney health booths or give talks to promote the awareness of kidney functions, its warning signs and leading causes, and ways of caring for our kidneys. Our recent event Listen to Your Kidneys, which is highlighted in this issue, saw kidney experts help clear misconceptions and share tips to protect the kidneys from kidney failure to people from all walks of life.

We look forward to your continued support and partnership as we do more for needy kidney patients and empower people to take charge of their kidneys. Have a good read!

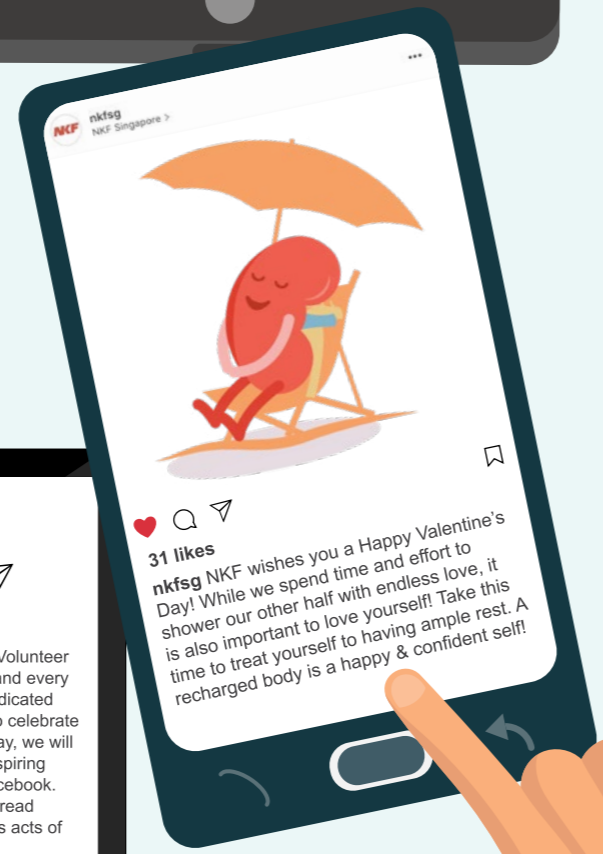
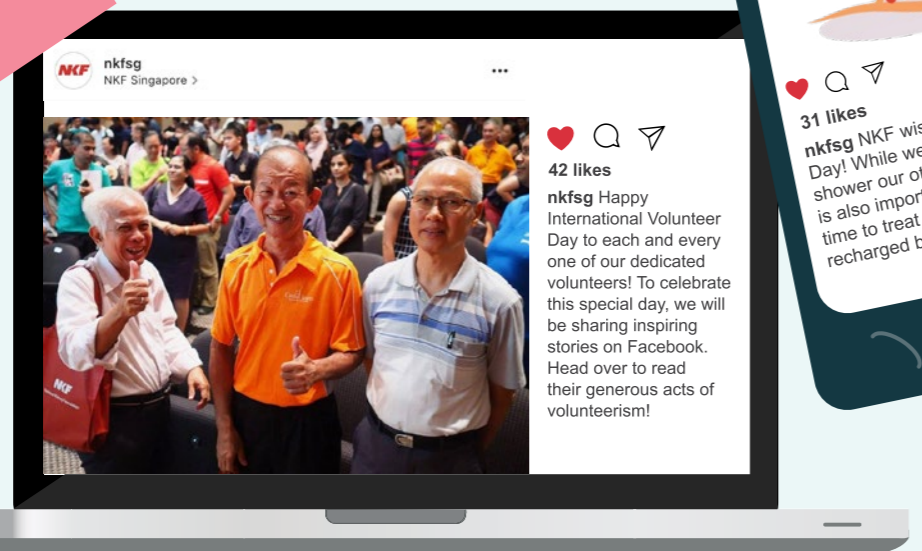
The Editorial Team

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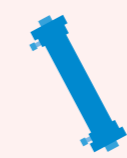


Coming of age in treating kidney failure



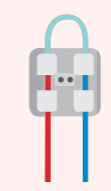
Bright idea!

Recognition of kidney disease is widely attributed to Dr Richard Bright and "Bright's disease" was used to refer to any type of kidney disease. His findings led to the practice of testing urine for protein — one of the first diagnostic tests in medicine.



Father of dialysis

Dr Willem Kolff is considered the father of dialysis. This young Dutch physician constructed the first dialyser (artificial kidney) in 1943, which is one of the foremost life-saving developments in the history of modern medicine.



The Scribner Shunt

Dr Belding Scribner came up with this shunt of connecting the patient to the dialyser using plastic tubes, one inserted into an artery and one into a vein. It was the first step to improved methods of access to the circulatory system, enabling dialysis patients to survive longer periods.



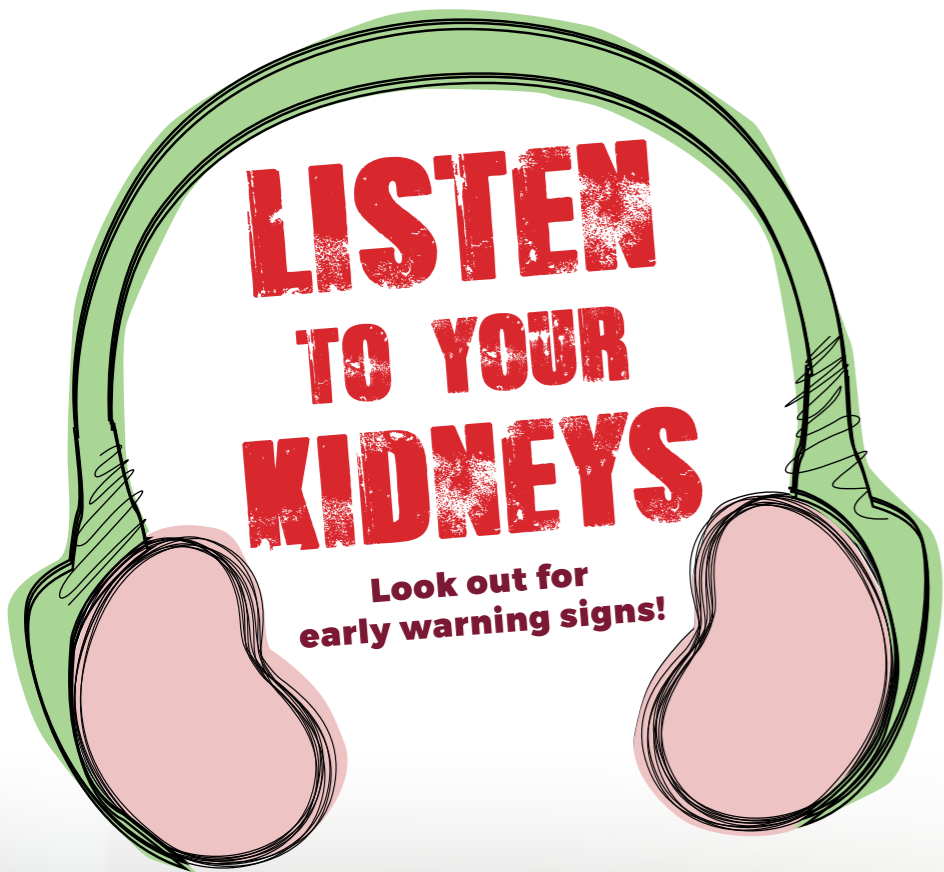
Founder of NKF - Professor Khoo Oon Teik

In the 1960s, about 200 kidney failure sufferers were dying every year because they could not afford dialysis, which was costly. Prof Khoo learnt about setting up dialysis facilities overseas and brought the knowledge back to Singapore. This led to thousands of lives being saved since then.



Who shares 7 April?

This is the day that NKF was formally inaugurated. It is a special day because it is also World Health Day, which marks the founding of the World Health Organisation. It is celebrated on 7 April annually covering a specific health topic of concern to people worldwide.



In conjunction with World Kidney Day, we organised Listen to Your Kidneys on 11 March 2018 at NKF's HQ. Kidney experts helped clear misconceptions and shared tips to protect the kidneys from kidney failure through an interactive forum, Busting Kidney Myths. There were also a kidney screening, kidney workout and a talk to dispel myths and learn practical tips for healthier food choices. Over 600 people from all walks of life participated in this meaningful event.



Flag Day

About 800 volunteers from all walks of life came together to make a difference in the lives of kidney patients and donned T-shirts with health messages to create awareness of kidney health on 18 November 2017. Our special thanks to BreadTalk Group, Equinix Singapore, Football Association of Singapore, Geng Sihat @ Gombak, Hoe Kee Hardware, Hupsteel Limited, Northern Trust Management Services Asia, Sheng Siong Supermarket, Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken AB (publ) & Woh Hup for supporting us by placing donation tins at their premises or encouraging their staff to donate. Over \$200,000 was raised through this event for needy kidney patients.



3 new dialysis centres benefitting 366 patients

To meet the rising demand for dialysis, three new dialysis centres have come to fruition, thanks to a caring community. We now have 35 dialysis centres islandwide with more in the pipeline.

	Operational Dates
NKF Queenstown Dialysis Centre	December 2017
The Hour Glass-NKF Dialysis Centre (West Coast Branch)	February 2018
Jo & Gerry Essery-NKF Dialysis Centre located at Marsiling	April 2018

Did you know?

World Kidney Day (WKD) is a global awareness campaign aimed at raising awareness of the importance of our kidneys and is observed annually on the 2nd Thursday in March. Held on 8 March this year, the theme was "Kidneys & Women's Health" as chronic kidney disease (CKD) affects approximately 195 million women worldwide and it is currently the 8th leading cause of death in women, with close to 600,000 deaths each year.



Whatever help you give matters

Ms Jennifer Bay has been regularly donating to NKF since 2013, sponsoring new dialysis machines. She also contributes towards rehabilitation programmes from providing needy kidney patients with basic day-to-day essentials to psychosocial and emotional support, which is a vital part in their road to recovery. She has also roped in her mother, husband, daughter and friends to support the needy.

“If you can make somebody else’s life better, just do it. Every one of us should bring a little part of our hearts to help someone.”

Jennifer

“My parents were strong influences in my life and were very involved in charity work. I first knew about NKF’s cause from my mum. She had found out that the temple she was helping donated dialysis machines to provide a lifeline to poor kidney patients. It was also something she wished to do. Her desire to help others in need left an indelible impression on me to help the sick and downtrodden who are suffering.

But it was not until my near death experience due to a nagging abdominal pain when I returned to work after giving birth to my daughter that it struck me hard of what it is like truly being sick and the pain, suffering and anguish one has to endure. Having pulled through my ordeal and being given a second chance at life made me realise that everyone in their own way can, and should help others to live their life to the fullest, regardless of the situation they are in. No matter how much the suffering, everybody needs help. What makes me happy is benefitting others in need and making them happy.

Mum also helps to deliver basic essentials to patients’ homes who are struggling to meet the basic needs of daily living. This is another way of helping but more than that, kidney patients need support for their emotional and mental conditions. There will always be people who will try to help them in their social interaction to reintegrate into the community and provide friendship to improve their overall well-being. They must believe that there is this support out there and focus on how they can live their lives better and meaningfully.

I always try to encourage others whom I am in contact with to support a worthy cause and I am happy that many of them have found fulfilment in doing this. To me, involving more people means exponential growth.

I am glad that doing my part for the less privileged has rubbed off on my daughter. She came up with the idea of doing origami to sell and donate the money to NKF. She had gathered a group of schoolmates and during their recess time, they would make and sell them to teachers and friends for whatever amount they were comfortable giving. She also donated her birthday “ang bao” money last year as a way of bringing blessings to patients.

While doing business in neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar, I have seen the needs of the less fortunate there. So, I am also helping to provide food and amenities to the villages, including building a hospice and schools.

Everyone should try to have a balance by managing their own expectations in life and what they can give to others. As for me, I do not want to lead the rest of my life earning money. It is just a means of survival. Money is the minimum I can help with, as it is the easiest form of donation. When I retire, I hope to devote more of my time doing volunteer work.”

You can support too!

Visit <http://bit.do/make-a-donation>



A new lease of life



Mr Aaron Tay, 38, had weathered the storms in his life. He had kidney problems since he was eight and in his 20s, was told that he had only five years to live if he did not have a kidney transplant. So it was indeed a blessing when his younger brother donated a kidney to him.

Aaron did not have a normal childhood. Suffering from inflammation of the kidneys (nephritis) at a very young age meant that he had to make regular visits to the hospital, undergo multiple tests and needles poked into him constantly. He also had a cancer scare with a tumour in his nose. Moreover, he suffers from a condition where he produces little haemoglobin, which is used by red blood cells to carry oxygen around the body. It was one blow after another and it was no wonder that Aaron struggled with clinical depression.

Only 5 years to live if no kidney transplant

When he eventually went on dialysis, it was very restrictive for him as he was only allowed to drink 500ml of water a day. The dialysis sessions also left him tired and drained. As his heart grew increasingly weak because of the fluid build-up in his body, he was told by the doctor in 2008 that he had only five years to live if he did not have a transplant.

Brother volunteered to donate a kidney

His mother had contracted diabetes and could not donate her kidney and his father was too old. However, his brother Caleb, younger by six years, willingly came forth to give him his kidney. It took eight months to prepare for the operation and the successful operation took five hours.

Given renewed life

By this time, he had started dating Sharon, a renal nurse he met at NKF while he was on dialysis. She had agreed to marry him if he survived the transplant. One year after the transplant, they got married. Today, he is the proud father of three children – Raena, one year old; and twins Raysa and Raquel, both six.

Except for a couple of minor scares, Aaron is leading and fulfilling life with his family after his transplant. He is also now able to focus on his career as a financial adviser without the disruption of thrice weekly dialysis. With a flexible work schedule, he spends more time with his family. He is grateful to his brother for giving him the ultimate gift of life.

He says that his family is now his priority. He makes sure he has the support group of loved ones and friends because if anything happens to him, they will be the ones taking care of his family. "I never forget I am living on grace."

“The first thing that I did was to drink a litre of water. It felt so good.”

Aaron

Dialysis patients can no longer excrete large quantities of fluids, hence excess fluids might be retained in the body resulting in an overload of blood circulation. As such, they have a daily fluid restriction of 500ml to 1000ml which include the intake of plain water, tea, coffee, milk, gravy, soup, porridge and ice cream.



“ I am strong-willed and positive ”

I am always cheerful and laughing when I am with others, spreading happiness to all those around me. Living with my 89-year-old mother, I also take care of her daily needs as I am her sole caregiver.

To have a steady and meaningful job, I took up courses to upgrade myself and I am now a freelance trainer teaching workplace literacy.

I also spend time in the kitchen as much as possible cooking healthy food such as steamed fish, pork with eggs and blended vegetables.

My life may be simple but I am living it to the fullest. I am happy and confident about the future.

Double blow

However, if you were to see me today, you would never have known the pain and anguish that I went through before and how I was grappling to cope with life.

It was only a few years back when I suffered a double blow. I was diagnosed with kidney failure as well as breast cancer. I had to undergo an operation for my cancer and had a relapse in 2015, around the same time that I needed to start dialysis.

I believed that I was nearing the end of my life's journey. I initially kept my health condition from my family as I did not want them to worry about me.

Becoming stronger and positive

However, with quality treatment, care and support from NKF, as well as finding strength through my religious faith, I gradually built up the courage to look ahead and make something out of my life. I was determined not to let my illness weigh me down.

Sharing the health message

Today, I share my life experiences with people who are willing to listen with the goal of encouraging them to lead a healthy life and persuading them to go for regular health check-ups. I believe that early diagnosis of any illness can and will save lives.

Madam Ng Bee Yeong, 58

“ No matter what, just be positive and cheerful, and take care of your health. Just don't stop believing that life will work out for you. ”



Volunteering gives me fulfilment

72-year-old retiree Mr Wong Siew Cheong, who lives in Redhill, has been fetching kidney patient Madam Noriah Jonit from the NKF's dialysis centre in Ghim Moh back to her home thrice weekly since 2016.

The casual conversations he had with kidney patients like Noriah, 63, while ferrying them to and from dialysis sessions has taught Siew Cheong the virtues of resilience and patience.

“It's a humbling experience. For people with a lifelong medical condition (like kidney failure), these patients are very resilient,” said Siew Cheong. “I have been very encouraged by their positive outlook in life.”

For Noriah, the services rendered to her by Siew Cheong has helped her tremendously. She said, “I am thankful to Siew Cheong, otherwise my husband who works as a security guard has to rush during his lunchtime to come in a taxi to fetch me, which costs about \$20 each time.”

On days when he is away or not up to the task, he would arrange for family members to cover his duties. He is happy that he has the capability to help the needy, especially when they tell him how much they appreciate his time and efforts. When he is not volunteering, he stays at home to take care of his grandchildren.

Siew Cheong, who started volunteering at the NKF in 2012 with his daughter, has spent about 224 hours escorting patients and made a total of 142 trips over the past year.

To find out more about our volunteer programmes, please contact volunteer@nkfs.org



Go healthy with your home cooked meals!

Did you know?

Singaporeans take an average of 8.3g of salt daily, which is **60% more** than the recommended daily intake.

Apart from diabetes, high blood pressure is the other leading cause of kidney failure in Singapore. A high sodium diet increases the risk of high blood pressure (hypertension). Therefore, the recommended daily intake of sodium is 2000mg per day. This equates to approximately 1 teaspoon of salt.

In line with this year's World Kidney Day theme "Kidneys & Women's Health", we aim to empower women to prepare healthier, low sodium home cooked meals for their families. Most people do not realise that bottled sauces and seasonings have high sodium content. Here are some of the common sauces and seasonings used at home, and their sodium content per 1 tablespoon:



Tips to reduce sodium content

- When cooking, always taste your food before adding in more salt or seasonings
- Opt for fresh food ingredients instead of processed food (e.g. pringles, ham, deli meats, sausages, canned food, etc)
- Substitute flavourings with natural flavours such as herbs and spices, garlic, onion, ginger or lemon juice
- Opt for sauces and seasonings labelled with the "Lower in Sodium" healthier choice symbol. Use it sparingly
- When shopping, compare products using the Nutrition Information Panel and choose those with lower sodium content "per 100ml" or "per 100g"



Get going with a "kidney workout"!

Here are easy-to-do and useful exercises for you to do at home for a "kidney workout" as regular exercise is important towards preventing diabetes and hypertension which can lead to chronic kidney disease.

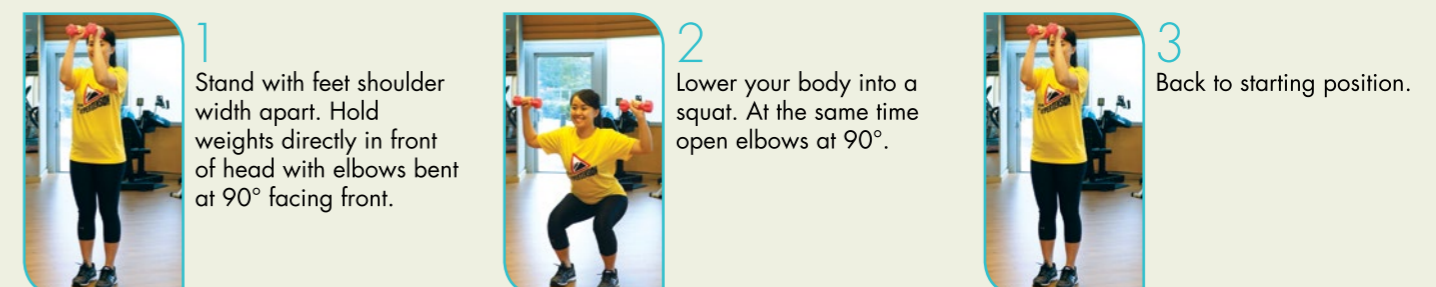
Safety rules

- Do not hold your breath
- Engage your core muscles, maintain upright position whenever possible
- Stop if you experience pain at any of your joints

Arm Curl and Back Lunge



Chest Fly and Squat



Chest Press and Knee Raise



Side Shoulder Raise and Hip Abduction





Living a **free** and **productive** life

60-year-old Mr Peh Chiu Guan John has been on peritoneal dialysis (PD), a home-based treatment for over two years and enjoys the freedom that comes with this form of dialysis treatment.

He is happy to work full-time driving a mini tour bus six days a week. As the sole-breadwinner in his family, this enables him to contribute towards his family, especially as his son is currently doing his National Service and daughter studying in university. It also gives him a sense of self-worth and meaning to his life. He does not feel that he is being a burden to his family.

Juggling work with dialysis schedule

When Chiu Guan was first diagnosed with kidney failure, he was in a state of confusion with so many things running through his mind. He was unsure which dialysis treatment he should opt for. He started off on haemodialysis where he underwent dialysis thrice weekly at a dialysis centre. Having to travel to the dialysis centre was disruptive to his work. He had to schedule his working times around his dialysis schedule, which he found very challenging. He did not have time to have proper meals at the right time as he was always rushing to get to work or his dialysis sessions on time. He found it very inconvenient and stressful.

He also said that poking a needle into him was very painful and he had to shout out loud each time it was done during his dialysis sessions.

Chose PD for greater freedom

Several months later, a fellow patient whom he met at the hospital told him about the benefits of being on PD. This triggered him to think more about doing dialysis at home for about 10-hours at night while he sleeps. He also picked up a brochure to

find out more about PD. After speaking to the doctor who told him that his medical condition allowed him to do PD, Chiu Guan gave it serious thought. He then decided to make the switch to PD.

Being self-reliant

NKF's PD nurse came to his home regularly to help guide, support and build his confidence during his initial period as part of our PD home care support services. Since then, Chiu Guan has become self-reliant and able to carry out his treatment daily easily without any help from his wife and children. Our dietitian also visited him to provide nutrition information for appropriate dietary choices and counsel him to make behavioural changes towards eating right.

No regrets choosing PD

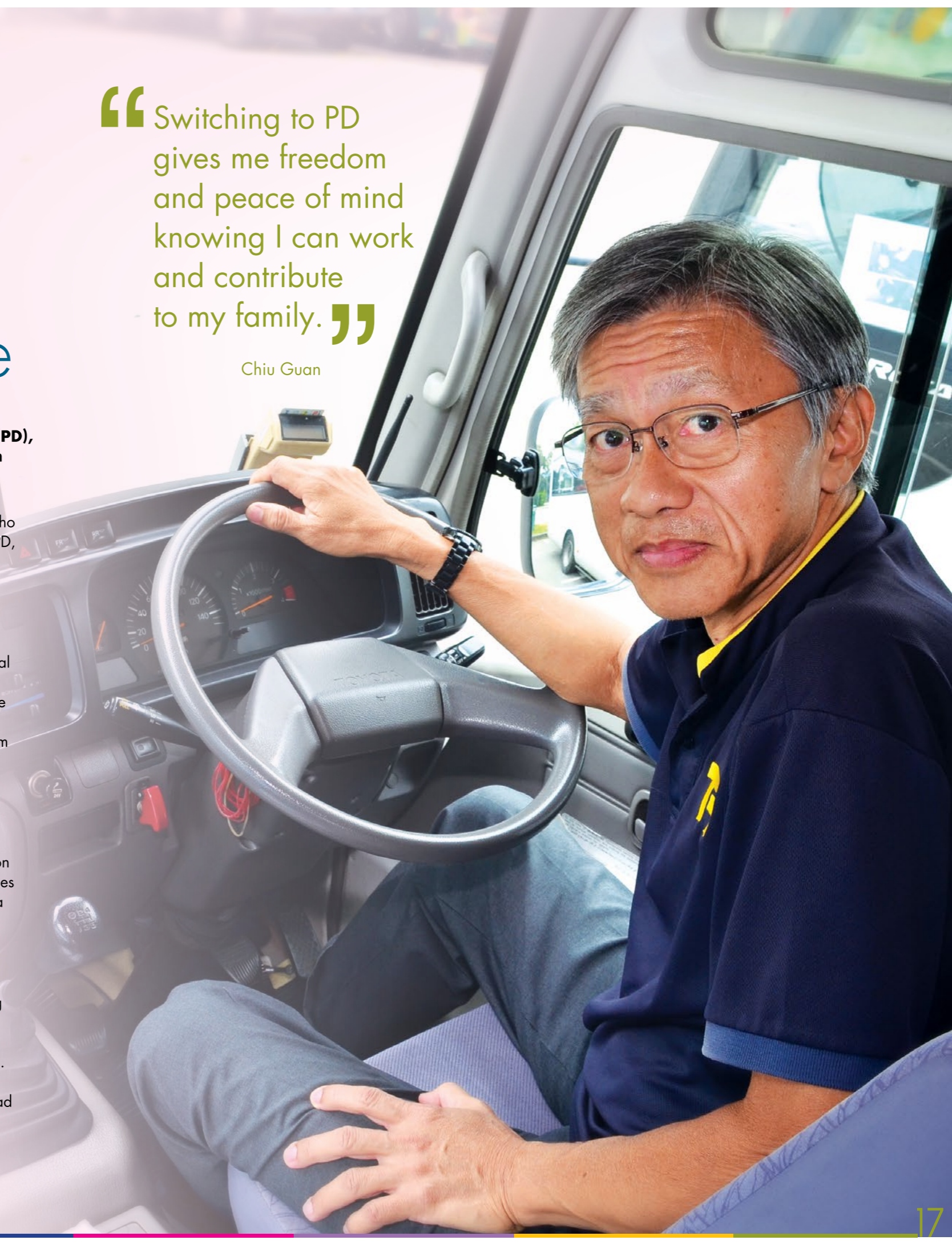
Chiu Guan has been doing well ever since he started on PD and his happy about his choice of treatment. He does not feel his lifestyle is restricted and he is able to lead a fulfilling and meaningful life with his family. He is also glad that he has no more painful needling.

Lending his support

To encourage pre-dialysis patients who are considering PD, he has opened his home to them so that they can see for themselves the ease, convenience and comfort in carrying out this mode of treatment in a home-setting. When he attends PD care group sessions for social interaction and sharing, he carries himself well to spread this positivity to fellow patients. Chiu Guan indeed has become a PD advocate.

“Switching to PD gives me freedom and peace of mind knowing I can work and contribute to my family.”

Chiu Guan



“Machine doctor” who helps sustain lives



NKF Bio Medical Engineer Mr Ramesh Arumugam, 42, is passionate about his work in ensuring that the dialysis machines and medical instruments are working smoothly as they contribute a big part to patients' medical outcomes. He feels a sense of fulfilment in using his knowledge to serve the patients.

How many members are there in your team? How do you go about your work? Is there a comprehensive system?

My team comprises seven engineers including myself and one admin executive to look after admin work at the department. Each engineer looks after five to six of our 35 centres dialysis centres in operation. Should there be any major breakdowns, engineers are spread out at various dialysis centre locations islandwide in order to reach the affected centre within 20 minutes. We also work closely with medical specialists, nurses and infection control teams to set standards on various segments of dialysis as well as ensuring the safe delivery of treatment in the dialysis centres.

Are there any special experiences and encounters in your job?

During the H1N1 flu virus in 2009, the engineers were unable to travel from one dialysis centre cluster zone to another for several weeks due to quarantine reasons. Every day was a challenge but we managed to troubleshoot and solve any issues with the dialysis machines, water treatment system and other bio-medical equipment.

As someone who works behind the scenes, do you meet patients in person or encourage them?

Since working with NKF, whenever I get a call for machine problems, I will go down to the dialysis centre to solve them. When the patients see me, they will call me “machine doctor”. I will laugh and tell them that they are right, but will let them know that I am not actually a doctor but an engineer.

If you, or someone you know, is keen to join NKF for a rewarding and enriching profession in renal care, please contact hr@nkfs.org

Are there tests for early detection of kidneys failing or kidney disease?

Keith Goh

Dear Keith

Yes, there are tests and procedures for kidney disease diagnosis. The tests include Serum Creatinine which is a key indicator to determine how well the kidneys are functioning and Urine Analysis to find out how much albumin (a type of protein) is in the urine as having too much protein is an early sign of kidney damage. Kidney disease is a progressive disease and there are five Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) stages. The glomerular filtration rate (GFR) will determine what stage of kidney disease the person is at. You may require additional blood tests and screening depending on your condition.

In its early stages, it is usually managed with diet and medication. With this approach, most people can slow or stop the progression of kidney disease and enjoy a normal lifestyle. Those with medical or family history of diabetes, cardio-vascular disease including hypertension, stroke, obesity or kidney disease are at higher risk of kidney failure. Hence, it is important for one to go for regular health screenings and to consult one's general practitioner or healthcare provider who will be able to advise on the necessary course of action where needed.

Find out more at <http://bit.do/kidneyfailure>

Is a kidney transplant better than dialysis?

Fatimah Sulaiman

Dear Fatimah

A kidney transplant offers best long term survival and quality of life. It is the most optimal solution to kidney failure. The transplanted kidney can substitute almost fully the lost functions of the failed kidneys and it usually begins to function right away, thus allowing the patient to lead a normal life. With a new lease of life, the patient no longer faces day-to-day restrictions due to having to undergo dialysis for the rest of his or her life.

Have a question concerning your kidneys?



Have your concerns addressed by our in-house doctor,
Dr Mooppil Nandakumar, Director of Medical Services
contact_us@nkfs.org

(with subject header - Q&A) and the selected question/s will be answered and published in the next issue.

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FOR 4 HOURS?

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