“in sickness and in health, till death do us part”

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Bringing hope for the future 4

NKF Kidney Awareness through fun at Junction 8 8
Years of diabetes led to kidney failure

Mdm Chong Hang Peng, 62, has been a diabetic patient for over 30 years. When she was first diagnosed with diabetes, she was still indulging in her favourite food like durians and cakes. In fact, for the love of durians, Mdm Chong would visit durian plantations in Malaysia for her indulgence. She was unaware that diabetes is one of the leading causes of kidney failure in Singapore. The chronic disease finally took its toll on her when she succumbed to kidney failure four years ago. She was devastated.

“When I first found out that I had kidney failure, I was both sad and stunned. I thought, why me?” said the soft spoken Mdm Chong.

One blow after another

Already depressed for having kidney failure, Mdm Chong suffered another blow. Her diabetic condition caused her right feet to develop an ulcer which is a sore in the skin. Due to poor circulation and neuropathy in the feet, the ulcers became infected and led to the eventual amputation of her right leg in August last year.

Although Mdm Chong was fitted with a prostatic leg, she has not gotten used to it and would often revert to using the wheelchair because her whole body feels weak most of the time.

Due to her misery, Mdm Chong will often cry herself to sleep at night. If there is one regret in Mdm Chong’s life, it would have been not taking better care of her diabetic condition before it took such a serious turn.

Her caring husband

Her husband Mr Oh Cheang Soon, 74, is always by her side to help and comfort her. Mdm Chong relies heavily on him to bring her for physiotherapy and dialysis treatment.

At his age where most are retired and spending time with their grandchildren, Mr Oh is mentally exhausted and deprived of sleep from having to care for Mdm Chong. Since her amputation, Mdm Chong lacks the strength to change sides when she feels numb while lying on one side of her body. As such, Mr Oh has to wake up four to five times during the night to help her.

“Sometimes, I would scream at her because I need my sleep too. I would also cry because of the dire situation we are in”, said Mr Oh.

Stuck in a financial rut

Their only son, who works overseas, is unable to send back enough money to help them. In fact, Mr Oh has not been receiving any allowance from his son as his son has to temporarily stop working due to an injury. To make matters worse, Mr Oh himself suffers from arthritis, gout, and a disease called Neurofibromatosis.

“For the Oh’s, life is kept to a bare minimum as they are left with very little money every month after paying for all the other expenses. Fortunately, NKF is subsidising Mdm Chong’s dialysis fees and is giving her $100 a month taxi assistance for her trips to the dialysis centre for treatment.

A love solid as a rock

Married to Mdm Chong for 40 years, Mr Oh is her pillar of strength in these difficult times. When asked why he is so willing to take care of Mdm Chong, he remarked, “I vowed to take care of her in sickness and in health when we got married. If I were the one who is sick today, she would have done the same”.

It is heartening to hear these words from a man who, despite his physical tiredness and grim financial situation, has not given up on the one whom he had promised to live with for the rest of his life. Mr Oh’s selfless spirit and love are indeed virtues for others to emulate.

Do you know that every year, 700 people in Singapore undergo amputation? That means, on average, 2 people lose their legs every day!

One of the results of diabetes is foot ulcers, which can lead to gangrene and ultimately, amputation.

If you are diabetic, please take good care of your feet!
The diagnosis of end-stage renal disease and its treatment is a major turning point in a patient’s life. At this stage, the decision to start dialysis is often accompanied by feelings of fear, ignorance and confusion, not only in the patient but also their families. At this time, education of the disease and its treatment is often not easily understood. As a result, there is very often denial and a consequent delay in dialysis treatment. The medical complications, when dialysis is eventually started urgently, are frequent.

NKF therefore believes that early education of the functions of the kidney, kidney diseases, and the treatment of renal failure should be instituted for the young people of Singapore, so that the myths and mysteries of these conditions can be clarified at a young age and outside the immediate ambience of a major illness. It will also cater to adults to create awareness on the early detection and prevention of kidney diseases.

In the long term, it is hoped that the general public as well as potential patients and their families would be better informed of kidney diseases and its treatment so that they can help in preventing kidney failure as well as understand and support those who unfortunately do develop kidney failure.

The Kidney Discovery Centre (KDC) is planned to address these concerns and will enable, in particular for schoolchildren between 10 to 16 years of age, to learn and appreciate the kidneys, and kidney diseases and their treatment through the guided visits.

The KDC will be housed at level 2 of the NKF headquarters and will have 4 sections with interactive displays. These include, Human Body & Function of Kidneys; Kidney Failure & Prevention of Kidney Diseases; Future Development of Treatment of Kidney Diseases; History of Dialysis in Singapore (NKF Milestones).

NKF’s Kidney Discovery Centre

BRINGING HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

If you wish to make a donation towards the establishment of the KDC, please complete the enclosed self-addressed Business Reply Envelope and send it back to us. Your gift will go a long way in our efforts to prevent kidney failure.

The KDC is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2010.

With your support, the KDC will bring hope to the people of Singapore for many generations to come.
Feedback from those who attended the Learning Journey

“I now know the importance of taking care of my diet so as to prevent kidney failure.”
~ Student from Hai Sing Catholic School

“I have gained a better understanding of the work of NKF and learnt a lot on the importance of the kidney.”
~ Teacher from Ministry of Education

About our kidneys
Kidney failure patients are unable to pass urine compared to a healthy person as their kidneys can no longer form urine properly. Patients have to restrict fluid intake to 500-1000ml per day, i.e. 4 glasses.

Large amount of medication
Besides the dialysis machine, patients also need an array of medication to supplement what their kidneys cannot provide.

Question and Answer Session
The Learning Journey ends with a Question and Answer Session for the students.

About our Kidneys

1. Kidney failure patients are unable to pass urine compared to a healthy person as their kidneys can no longer form urine properly. Patients have to restrict fluid intake to 500-1000ml per day, i.e. 4 glasses.

2. Heart disease and cancer are the leading causes of kidney failure in Singapore.

3. The right kidney is slightly lower in your abdominal cavity and smaller than your left kidney because of the position of the _____.
   1) Heart
   2) Gall bladder
   3) Liver

4. Over the last decade, there were about _____ new patients with kidney failure on dialysis in Singapore.
   1) 650
   2) 2,650
   3) 6,500

5. Patients with kidney dysfunction commonly develop _____ as a result of decreased hormone production in the kidneys.
   1) Anaemia
   2) Chest pains
   3) Rashes

6. Healthy kidneys work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to clean the blood in our body. (True / False)

7. Spouses of kidney patients are less likely to have chronic kidney disease. (True / False)

8. Using painkilling medications for a long period of time may also damage the kidneys and cause chronic renal failure. (True / False)

9. Kidney disease does not increase one’s risk of having heart and blood vessel disease. (True / False)

10. During kidney transplantation, the failed kidneys will be removed while the new kidney is implanted. (True / False)

Large Amount of Medication
Besides the dialysis machine, patients also need an array of medication to supplement what their kidneys cannot provide.

The artificial kidney
Students holding the artificial kidney, known as the dialyser, which acts like the kidney to remove excess fluid and filters waste products from the body. There are approximately 200,000-300,000 fibres in the dialyser.

Up close and personal with the dialysis machine
The dialysis machine’s function is to replace the kidneys’ function to remove excess water and waste products from the body.

The needling process
Kidney patients who are on haemodialysis treatment need an operation to provide a ‘vascular access’ on their arm so that blood can flow from their bodies to the dialysis machine at a faster speed and larger volume to remove toxins, waste products, and excess fluids. This is a painful process that the patients have to go through three times a week, each time with two new needle wounds.

How much do you know about your kidneys?

Please see below for answers.

1. Each kidney is about the size of a _____.
   1) Fist
   2) Marble
   3) Ear

2. _____ are the leading causes of kidney failure in Singapore.
   1) Heart disease and cancer
   2) Diabetes and hypertension
   3) Stroke and urinary tract infection

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JOIN IN THE EXCITEMENT DURING

NKF KIDNEY HEALTH WEEK
5-11 JULY 2010 (MON-SUN)
11AM-9PM, JUNCTION 8 ATRIUM

THE NEW NKF IS PROUD TO HOLD ITS INAUGURAL PUBLIC AWARENESS EVENT, NKF KIDNEY HEALTH WEEK, TO HELP RAISE THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF KIDNEY DISEASE IN THE COMMUNITY. IT PROMISES TO BRING FUN AND EXCITEMENT FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!

DON’T MISS OUT ON THIS EDUCATIONAL AND ENTERTAINING EVENT!

From 5-11 July (Mon-Sun)
• FREE HEALTH SCREENINGS FOR THE PUBLIC
• KIDNEY EDUCATIONAL EXHIBITS
• CHILDREN’S COLOURING CONTEST

11 July (Sun)
• SHENG SIONG-NKF 4-HOUR SEAT CHALLENGE*
  Participants are to sit on the chair for 4 hours, so as to empathise with dialysis patients who have to sit for 4 hours during each dialysis session

* For further enquiries or registration, please contact us:
  Email: contact_us@nkfs.org
  Tel: 6299 0200

FREE BALLOONS
K BUDDY APPEARANCE (NKF’S VERY OWN KIDNEY MASCOT)

LIVE BAND PERFORMANCES
ATTRACTIVE PRIZES TO BE WON!

Sponsors:

Healthy Air Enterprise Pte Ltd

Supporting radio station

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