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nkf connect

“It was a double blow for the Yap family. First, Madam Kow Fung Ngoh, 72, was struck down with kidney failure. Then, her son Damien, 38, suffered the same fate. Their journey in battling this disease is one of hope, thanks to caring people.”

Story on page 2



Bringing Love, Joy and Hope to Kidney Patients | 4

One Woman's Compassion | 6

Are You Drinking Enough Water? | 7



A mother and son's

Journey of Hope

Mdm Kow Fung Ngoh, 72, has had high blood pressure and diabetes from a young age. Despite trying to take care of her diet, she was still diagnosed with kidney failure in 2008. Doctors told her it was in her genes and that she needed to go for dialysis.

At first, she refused to go, simply because she did not want to burden her family with the high costs of dialysis. She spent a year surviving on medication, shuttling in and out of the hospital over 20 times, each time with the doctors fighting to save her life.

During this period, her only child, Mr Damien Yap, 38, and her husband, Mr Yap Kow Guan, 74, shared the responsibilities of taking care of her and their home.

In the end, after much persuasion from her family members, she had no choice but to go for haemodialysis in 2009. Not long after, four of her toes were amputated due to diabetes. This hampered her mobility, so she spent most of her time with a walking stick or in a wheelchair.

At first, Mdm Kow dialysed at a private dialysis clinic where the monthly cost came up to about \$3,000. The cost of dialysis, as well as the financial burden of taking care of two aged parents, fell solely upon Damien, who was the only breadwinner in the family.

During the week, the elder Mr Yap took care of the household chores, and on days when his wife needed to go for her dialysis sessions, took her to the clinic.



Damien, who works as an engineer, would take over from his aged father on weekends.

This went on for a few months, until Damien's savings started to run out from the cost of dialysis and frequent visits to the hospital.

They turned to the NKF for help and Mdm Kow was accepted into their dialysis programme. She now pays about \$100 a month out-of-pocket for dialysis instead of \$3,000. Because she has trouble walking, NKF also pays for an ambulance to bring her back and forth

from her dialysis sessions.

This was a huge relief for Damien and the elderly Mr Yap, who had to take Mdm Kow to and fro on a wheelchair on the MRT every time she went for dialysis.

As the family came to terms with Mdm Kow's illness, there was more bad news.

On his way home from work in his colleague's car in November 2010, Damien suddenly had difficulty breathing and felt faint. His colleague rushed him to the hospital, where he was admitted for a mild heart attack. His doctor told him that his kidneys had failed and he needed to undergo dialysis.

Damien was shocked. He had diabetes from the time he was serving National Service, so he had always watched his diet. His health had always been fine. Why had his kidneys failed?

"I didn't know what to do. All sorts of thoughts went through my mind, like what was going to happen to my future and how was I going to take care of my parents, especially with my mother in her current condition. I didn't know how I was going to tell them."

It was on his third day in the hospital, when his parents visited him, that he finally broke the news to them.

Mdm Kow broke down and cried. She kept asking, "Why my son? Why does he have to get this illness? I'm old already, so it doesn't matter so much, but why him?"

That was in December 2010. Damien started dialysis shortly after.

He opted for Continuous Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis (CAPD), which allows him to be mobile and thus, does not disrupt his day time job. He has to undergo CAPD every five hours for about 30 minutes each time. He is thankful that he has an understanding and supportive boss.

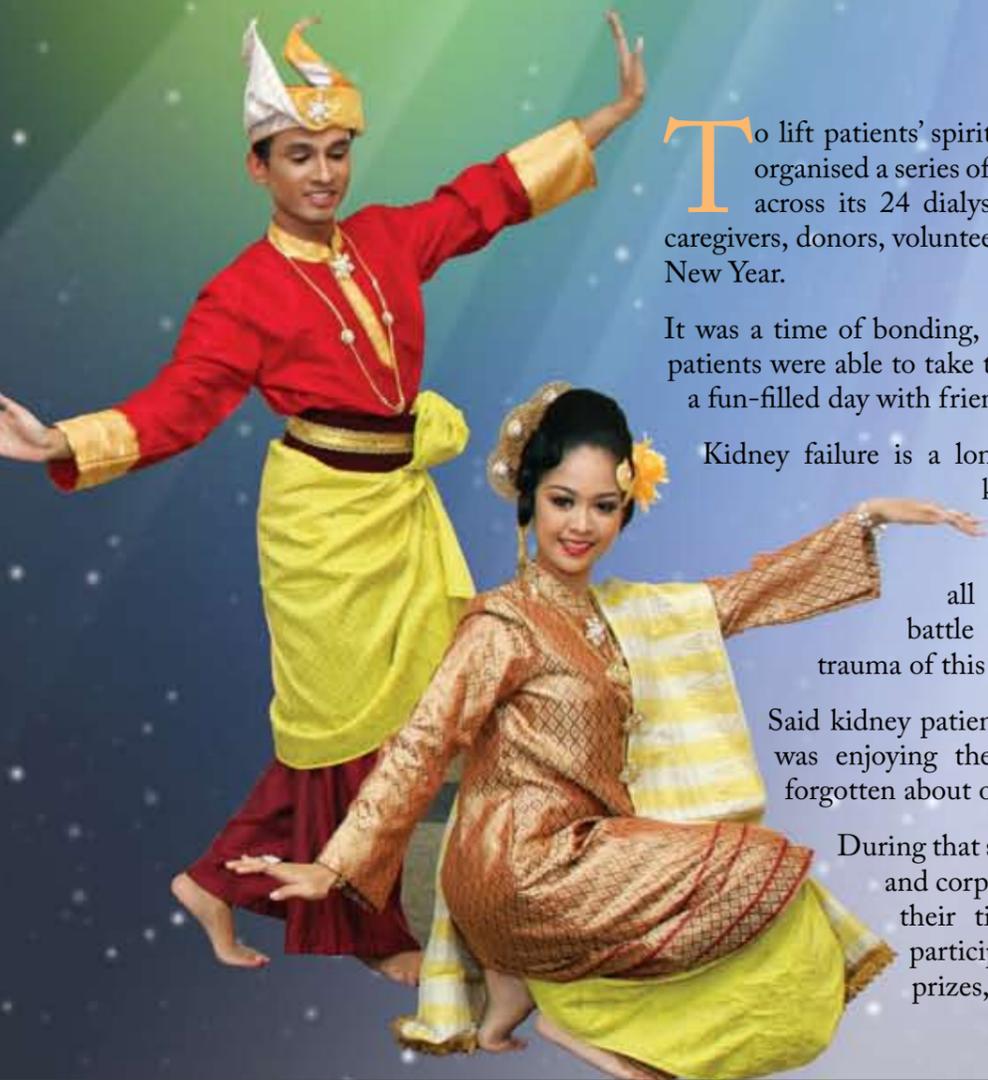
Damien is also receiving subsidies for his dialysis from NKF and participates in NKF's Caregivers Support sessions.

"I feel better after going for these sessions. Some of the other people there are worse off than me, some of them don't even have homes, and it makes me think, if they can go through that, then so can I. They also teach me things, such as about our diets, that I wouldn't have known."

Although worry for his parents and his future keeps him awake at night, Damien puts on a brave front and tries to be cheerful for his mother's sake; and he knows she does the same for him.

He is grateful to the people who support the NKF and gave him and his mother a second chance at life.

Bringing Love, Joy and Hope to Kidney Patients



To lift patients' spirits and spread love all around, NKF organised a series of year-end parties in December 2010 across its 24 dialysis centres for over 2,500 patients, caregivers, donors, volunteers and staff that spilled over to the New Year.

It was a time of bonding, friendship, joy and laughter, where patients were able to take their minds off their plight to enjoy a fun-filled day with friends and loved ones.

Kidney failure is a long-term illness and patients never know when exactly they will get a transplant. The wait can be long and sometimes, futile. They need all the support they can get as they battle the emotional and psychological trauma of this life-threatening disease.

Said kidney patient Mr Toh Chun Meng: "Everyone was enjoying themselves. For a moment, we had forgotten about our illness."

During that season of goodwill, caring individual and corporate sponsors came forth to devote their time and energy to organise and participate in the parties or donate food, prizes, gifts and money.



Patients specially dressed up for the occasion and received assorted door gifts while volunteers and staff decorated the dialysis centres with balloons, streamers and fairy lights.

The celebrations included refreshments and activities such as self-choreographed dances, singing, skits and games, with lots of prizes given away. Staff even got their children to perform a dance for patients.

The nurses at the dialysis centres outdid themselves by playing hosts, serving patients and guests and running the games. For the foreign nurses, the parties brought a comforting feeling of family togetherness since they were not able to celebrate the festive season with their loved ones in their homelands.

In a letter to NKF after the event, kidney patient Madam Wong Siew Kwan from Bukit Batok dialysis centre wrote that "it will forever stay within my heart." Mdm Wong had initially decided not to go for the party as she wanted to rest after a recent major operation but her domestic helper encouraged her to attend.

The year-end parties showed patients that there are people around who care, even those they had never seen or met before. Indeed, the parties were a celebration of love, joy and hope.



One Woman's Compassion



When she was still alive, Madam Katherine Tan decided to leave her estate to charity after her demise. She had come to know about the plight of kidney patients through various NKF media publicity and wanted to do something to help them. She decided to will her savings to NKF.

Mdm Tan passed away from pneumonia on 15 Oct 2009 and left a total of \$261,000 – the bulk of her assets – to NKF. After consulting with her family, the NKF purchased 13 dialysis machines with the donation. Each dialysis machine costs around \$20,000.

13 dialysis machines can support a total of 78 kidney patients, sustaining their lives while they undergo highly subsidised dialysis treatment, which normally would have been unaffordable for them.

This is Mdm Tan's legacy gift to the sick and needy, a foresighted act of compassion that endures even after she is gone. It not only gives a new lease of life to dialysis patients, but also directly impacts their children, spouses and other lives depending on them.

Ms Patricia Foo, Mdm Tan's daughter, is not surprised by her mother's decision to give away her savings. Her entire family, in fact, is very proud that Mdm Tan had made this arrangement.

"My mother had always preferred to spend on others rather than on herself. She would lie about having



NKF Chairman, Mr Gerard Ee (extreme right) and NKF CEO, Mrs Eunice Tay (2nd from right), with the family of the late Madam Katherine Tan at the plate-mounting ceremony on 9 October 2010.

eaten when she actually hadn't, so that we could have more to eat. Even when I was a working adult, she would always worry that I did not have enough money to spend and would never take any money from me."

A homemaker, Mdm Tan did not work and thus, had no direct source of income. She was a thrifty woman, however, and together with an inheritance from a relative, had put aside a tidy sum of money for rainy days.

"We actually talked about this (the legacy giving) when she was still around. There are no 'bad feelings'; all of us feel that she had done the right thing and that it's very meaningful. Even though she is no longer with us, I believe that she knows and is happy that her gift has been used to extend the lives of so many people. At least this way, a part of her will always be around."

A plate-mounting ceremony of the dialysis machines was held by NKF on 9 Oct 2010 to commemorate Mdm Tan's selflessness. Her gift of life has given hope to many kidney patients.

Are You Drinking Enough Water?

Water – Arguably the most powerful healing substance known to man

Many of us know that an average healthy adult needs to drink at least 8 glasses or 2 litres of water a day, and that the average person cannot survive for more than a few days without water. But do we know why?

Why we need water

Water is needed to regulate body temperature, control basic functions, lessen the burden on the kidneys and liver by flushing out body waste, lubricate joints and assist in the transportation of nutrients to our cells.

When our body doesn't get enough water, dehydration occurs. The results of dehydration are many and varied, but some symptoms include a drop in brain function, slow metabolism, fuzzy short-term memory and bad breath.

Other negative effects include arthritis, loss of muscle tone, excess weight gain, dry skin, migraines, hypertension, digestive complications, and persistent constipation. Over time, more serious complications can arise, such as increased toxicity and even organ failure.

Water and the Kidneys

Dehydration can be extremely damaging for the kidneys, especially for senior citizens, as their kidney function may have deteriorated to some degree.

A healthy adult's kidneys excrete approximately 2 litres of urine and waste per day. When there is not enough water intake, there is nothing in which to

flush the body's waste products, such as uric acid and urea. As such, these substances build up in the body, leading to kidney stones and putting additional strain on the kidneys. Overtime, toxins can build up within the body, leading to many types of complications.

Maintaining a healthy water diet

There are a few things you can do to ensure you get sufficient water daily:

- Never wait until you feel thirsty before you start drinking, because by then you are already mildly dehydrated.
- What you can do is to buy yourself a couple of 1-litre flasks, leave one at home and bring the other to work. Fill the flasks with water and make sure you finish them every day.
- Eat plenty of fruits and green vegetables as about 20% of water can come from our diet.
- If you are going to be outdoors, bring along a water bottle to keep yourself hydrated; after exercising, drink at least a glass of water to replenish moisture lost through perspiring.
- If you work in an air-conditioned area, it is even more important to monitor your water intake as the dry air can cause rapid water loss.

Do this and be on your way to a healthier lifestyle today!

*Giving Life
& Hope*



NKF's FIRST EVER CHARITY DINNER

15 April 2011 (Friday)

**7pm - 10pm
Orchid Country Club**

Guest-of-Honour
President S R Nathan

Sales per Table
\$15,000, \$10,000 or \$5,000
(10 seats per table)

For enquiries on table sales and sponsorship opportunities, please contact:

Diana Sim
Tel: 6506 2273
Email: diana.sim@nkfs.org

NKF is breaking a five-year fund-raising hiatus to organise a major fund-raising event - its first ever charity dinner, with President Nathan as Guest-of-Honour. The money raised will go towards helping needy kidney patients.

As a show of support for kidney patients, President Nathan will be writing a Chinese calligraphy piece live onstage that evening.

This calligraphy piece will be auctioned together with the President's personal brush, which he will also be using onstage that evening.

This is the first time President Nathan is offering his personal brush set together with his calligraphy to be auctioned for charity.

The number of NKF patients continues to grow. A new dialysis centre is needed almost every year to cater to the growing demand by patients who cannot afford costly dialysis treatment.

Moreover, patients needing dialysis in Singapore are also getting older. Patients are increasingly medically frail as well as physically more dependent. Their psychosocial needs are thus greater.

With your support, NKF can continue to provide quality, affordable dialysis treatment and holistic care to needy kidney patients in Singapore not just for today, but for the unforeseeable future.

We count on your support.