"I wish I could turn back the clock and bring the wheels of time to a stop..."

said Mr Lim Kee Cheong who has been a dialysis patient for the past 12 years

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Getting down from the bed is something normal people do not need to think twice about. But for kidney patient Mr Lim Kee Cheong, 52, he is still getting used to having to balance on only one leg when he needs to get out of the bed. You see, two years ago, Mr Lim had to have his left leg amputated just below the knee. Diagnosed with diabetes at the age of 21, Mr Lim did not take this chronic disease seriously. “I was young back then, who would have thought that diabetes could affect me and give me a lifetime of regret now? Life went on as per normal when I was diagnosed with diabetes – daily late night beer-drinking sessions with friends and eating my favourite food like rojak at least once a day. No one told me the serious repercussions I would have to bear now”, said a regretful Mr Lim.

6 cans of soft drinks a day

The eldest of three other siblings, Mr Lim began his working life at the tender age of 12 while other boys at his age were probably happily studying and playing soccer. He started with simple jobs like dish washing and worked his way through to become a coffee shop cook by observing how the others cooked.

While working as a cook, he would usually perspire a lot in the kitchen due to all the heat and would reach out for a can of soft drink to quench his thirst. Before he knew it, he would easily consume at least 6 cans of soft drinks at the end of the day.

His unhealthy lifestyle coupled with family history meant that the inevitable would happen especially as Kee Cheong’s grandmother and mother also had diabetes. He was feeling under the weather for several days with symptoms of vomiting, giddiness, lack of appetite, and fainted in the toilet 12 years ago. Fortunately, Mr Lim’s brother came home early that day, found him unconscious and sent him to the hospital.

“God was merciful to me. My brother does not come home so early but for some reason, he decided to take half day off. If he didn’t find me, I may not be alive today”.

Mr Lim succumbed to kidney failure at the age of 40. Besides having diabetes that led to his leg being amputated and kidney failure, he is also plagued by a host of other medical conditions like a weak heart that causes breathlessness and gastric problem that gives him nausea and vomiting. These additional medical problems meant that he has to fork out money for these medications. He is very grateful to NKF for subsidising his dialysis fees and medication.

Making himself useful

Although he has difficulty moving around, Mr Lim tries to make himself useful around the house whenever he can. “I try not to be too much of a burden to my siblings and will help to hand wash the clothes at home or make barley drink for my siblings to drink”.

As a needy patient, Mr Lim receives free grocery items like rice, oil, bee hoon as well as a $60 voucher bi-monthly from the NKF’s “Grains of Hope” Programme.

Mr Lim has this piece of advice for others. “We want to enjoy life while we are still young, but do take your medical conditions seriously and take your medications regularly. Otherwise, you end up regretting like me”.

Too late to turn back the clock

When Mr Lim was diagnosed with kidney failure, his late father, who was then already 78 years old, was a pillar of strength. The pair had been inseparable since Mr Lim’s mother passed away in 1983 due to kidney failure. His father would take two different buses to the dialysis centre to accompany Kee Cheong home.

“My father was a loving dad who was always there for me. He would constantly remind me not to indulge in my favourite food since we had diet restrictions as kidney patients. When my father passed on late last year, I was very depressed. I stopped cooking at home as it was something I used to do when he was around”.

Now Mr Lim’s siblings would pack food from outside and bring home to him so he does not have to cook. He now relies on his youngest brother to help ferry him to and from the dialysis centre. But he is worried that things may change when his brother gets married and moves out of the family home. For now, Mr Lim has no choice but to take one day at a time.

FREE Health Screening for you!

As our valued donor, we would like to invite you for a complimentary health screening.

The health screening includes Glucose and Cholesterol profile (requires minimum 10-hour fasting), Urinalysis, Blood Pressure, Body Mass Index and Waist Measurement.

Date: 18 August 2012 (Saturday)
Venue: NKF Centre, 81 Kim Keat Road
Time: 8.00am - 12 noon

For enquiries, please call 6299 0200 or register at www.nkfs.org/healthscreening
Occupyng about 300 sq m at NKF’s headquarters in Kim Keat, the $1.1 million Kidney Discovery Centre (KDC) which was built in consultation with the Singapore Science Centre, is the first-of-its-kind in Southeast Asia. The centre was officially opened by Guest-of-Honour, Dr Amy Khor, Minister of State for Health on 3 April 2012 and is part of NKF’s 43rd anniversary celebrations. The Centre is fully sponsored by various organisations and generous individuals.

The KDC showcases exciting and interactive hands-on exhibits where visitors can learn about the kidneys, the plight of kidney patients, their physical and dietary constraints and the emotional traumas they have to face in coping with kidney failure.

NKF strongly believes that early education on the functions of the kidneys, 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 ambit of a major illness.

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.
It took just one day for 10 volunteers from Credit Suisse (Singapore) to paint the one-room rented flat of 75-year-old kidney patient Madam Syed Meerah.

When word got around in the company that there was an opportunity to get hands-on to help kidney patients, staff responded without hesitation. Within days, a group of volunteers were formed.

Being a company that believes in giving back to society, Credit Suisse (Singapore) has always encouraged its staff to do volunteer work. In the past, they donated money to aid those whose lives and homes have been destroyed in Tsunami and floods.

“My company is always very involved in various charity drives to help the needy and personally, I like to be more hands-on in helping the needy in practical ways,” said one of the volunteers, Patricia Yeo.

Madam Syed Meerah has long battled diabetes and hypertension until she succumbed to kidney failure 8 years ago. She attributes her diabetes to the fact that she used to consume three cans of sweetened energy drink to keep her awake while keeping 3 jobs to raise her 5 children.

Looking cheery and upbeat, Madam Syed Meerah said that the new coat of paint in the house has helped uplift her spirit.

“I’m very happy that these young people are willing to take a day off to help someone like me. Their effort have blessed my heart beyond words”, said Madam Syed after seeing the finished work.

Another volunteer, Nicole Seah, said, “All of us are usually too pre-occupied with our work and not aware of the living conditions and needs of the sick and elderly. I am glad that NKF has a system in place to reach out to these people by directly helping them in their day to day lives”.

The volunteers met just once to have a briefing on what to expect and the work involved. On the morning of the actual painting day, they swiftly sprung into action in an organised and efficient way and completed the job by the end of the day.

Indeed, they have not only brightened the home of Madam Syed Meerah, but also her life.

If you or your organisation would like to do volunteer work to benefit kidney patients, please call us at 6299 0200 or email: vmteam@nkfs.org

Please visit our website at www.nkfs.org to learn more about NKF’s volunteer programme “Circle of Hearts”.

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