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NKF's Founder, the late Professor Khoo On Teik
His Legacy Will Live On

A Tribute to NKF’s Founder, the late Professor Khoo Oon Teik (1921 – 2012)

The legacy of Professor Khoo Oon Teik’s humanitarian work, Founder of the National Kidney Foundation (NKF), will certainly live on after he passed away on 5 March 2012 due to a long illness.

Prof Khoo Oon Teik was Professor of Medicine in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Singapore. He inspired many doctors and developed many initiatives, but one illness held his abiding interest through all these years — chronic renal failure. He is widely considered the “Father of nephrology in Singapore”. Nephrology is the study of the kidney and its diseases.

In the mid 1950s, the death of his brother from chronic renal failure made him determined to help similarly afflicted patients. At that time, about 200 Singaporeans died each year from kidney failure.

When dialysis treatment became possible, he worked very hard and made this available in Singapore in 1961. The first dialysis facility in Singapore consisted of only one machine and two beds in Ward 21 of the old Singapore General Hospital (known then as Outram Road General Hospital). It could only accept acute cases of kidney failure.

As dialysis was a costly treatment, Prof Khoo realised that the resources of the community had to be mobilised to help kidney failure patients.

The dialysis machine used in the 1960s.

He rallied a group of like-minded colleagues and doctors and formed the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) in 1968. The NKF was then formally inaugurated on 7 April 1969.

Despite initial difficulties, he persevered and provided critical leadership as NKF developed and grew to provide dialysis care to renal failure patients in need of help.

Prof Khoo knew that kidney transplantation provided the best quality of life as dialysis was only an alternative treatment. He spearheaded the NKF kidney donation campaign in 1973 to dispel some of the fears and misconceptions of people about organ donation.

Through his initiative, NKF rallied the support of Singaporeans for the passage of the Human Organ Transplant Act (HOTA) in 1987, making Singapore the first Commonwealth country to adopt such legislation.

Prof Khoo inspired many with his vision, passion and commitment as he went about working for the sick. But it is his humanity that has been most remembered.

As the NKF continues its mission started by Prof Khoo 43 years ago, we are reminded of his steadfastness of vision and the values he set for helping the patients with kidney failure.

On behalf of the many who have suffered the anguish of kidney failure, the many who have cared for them and the many who have walked with and supported them on their courageous journeys, the NKF would like to pay tribute to a truly remarkable human being.

“NKF was born from the dream of one man. Prof Khoo pioneered the dialysis centre. His leadership and steadfast belief in his vision and passion to save lives has enabled his dream to blossom. From a humble tiny dialysis facility, NKF today services over 2,900 patients. Prof Khoo will always be remembered for this great humanitarian work.”

- Mr Gerard Ee, Chairman of NKF
The NKF marked another significant milestone when it celebrated the official opening of the Woh Hup-NKF Dialysis Centre on 26 February 2012 with its donors and supporters.

Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for the Environment and Water Resources and MP for Holland-Bukit Timah GRC was the Guest-of-Honour at the event.

This new centre is special in its own way because it is the first dialysis centre where the main contractor, Woh Hup (Private) Limited, and its sub-contractors, built and fully sponsored the construction costs of $625,900.

To make way for the Housing and Development Board’s en bloc redevelopment plans in Bukit Merah, the Singapore Contractors Association Limited (SCAL)—NKF Dialysis Centre at Henderson Road ceased operations and patients moved to this new centre in July 2011.

This new centre has 20 dialysis stations compared to 14 stations at Bukit Merah. Thus, it can accommodate 120 patients on three shifts, compared to 84 dialysis patients at Bukit Merah, an increase of 36 in terms of patient capacity.

However, it is not just about providing a roof where patients can go for their dialysis treatment. Apart from the people who administer the treatment and provide that human touch, it is important that the centre is equipped with the necessary medical equipment so that patients can receive quality treatment in their road to recovery.

The NKF is indeed grateful to a compassionate donor, the late Ms Tan Hwee Keow, who left a legacy of $500,000 to purchase new medical equipment for this centre. The memory of the late Ms Tan Hwee Keow will live on through the lives of the many who will benefit from this centre.

With such strong commitment from valued partners such as Woh Hup, the late Ms Tan Hwee Keow and 11 individual donors who donated dialysis machines, NKF can progress confidently to provide high-quality and cost effective dialysis treatment and care to needy patients at affordable, subsidised rates.

Free Dental Services for Needy Patients

During the opening ceremony of the new dialysis centre at Ghim Moh, NKF chairman Mr Gerard Ee announced that NKF’s needy kidney patients could now look forward to free dental services through a joint collaboration between the Foundation and Tsu Chi Foundation.

At present, about half of NKF’s kidney patients aged 60 and above suffer some degree of malnutrition due to insufficient protein intake. In fact, a kidney patient should be eating more proteins than a normal person as some proteins are lost during dialysis.

However, due to dental problems such as a lack of teeth, which hamper chewing, patients are unable to enjoy their food and lose their appetite and eventually become malnourished.

Available at Tsu Chi Free Health Screening & Medical Clinic, the free dental services comprise comprehensive consultations, fillings, extractions, scaling and denture-making services.

Said Mr Ee, “With this free service, patients will be able to enjoy eating and be happier. In this way, their psychosocial, nutritional and emotional needs are met and they can cope better with their condition and lead an overall better quality of life.”
The NKF’s first major public fundraising campaign in six years, the “Be an A.K. Giver”, was launched with the help of 300 Ang Mo Kio–Hougang grassroots leaders, as well as MP for Ang Mo Kio GRC and Adviser to AMK-Hougang Grassroots Organisations, Mr Yeo Guat Kwang. Championing this fundraiser, Mr Yeo pledged to match dollar-for-dollar the donations made by the grassroots leaders. Said Mr Yeo, “I think it’s important for me as an adviser to mobilise my grassroots leaders by leading by example… to encourage all our grassroots to do our part so that every resident will also do his or her part”.

Instead of donating to the general fund, the public can sponsor the cost of an artificial kidney for the patients. The A.K. Giver campaign was launched at the Ang Mo Kio–Hougang Constituency’s Chinese New Year celebrations held on 7 January 2012. The campaign is part of NKF’s public education cum fundraising initiative that aims to raise awareness among the public on the importance of a dialyser or Artificial Kidney (A.K.) in dialysis treatments to prolong the lives of kidney patients and the need for more funds to sustain its dialysis programme.
“Most of our patients come from lower-income families. With about 2,400 patients currently being treated at our 24 dialysis centres, we will need over $1 million to fund artificial kidneys annually. If one person donates $1 a day for one month, they can give “life” to a kidney patient on dialysis for that month.”

Mr. Gerard Et, Chairman of NKF

Give $1 a day to help kidney patients

An artificial kidney, shaped like a tube, plays an important role in removing waste products and cleansing the patient’s blood during treatment. For every dialysis treatment, a patient will need an artificial kidney, which costs $30 and can only be used for approximately one month of treatment.

Due to rising patient numbers and operating costs every year, NKF needs a hefty $58 million annually to support its various highly subsidised programmes for kidney patients. With an ageing population, NKF also has to increasingly deal with patients having age-related illnesses. As patients get weaker and more ill, their psychosocial needs become more complicated and they will need specialised care that is costly.

Charity begins at home

Emphasising that charity begins at home, NKF’s chief executive officer Mrs Eunice Tay said, “I am happy that NKF staff have also rallied together as a family to donate $9,188 to the A.K. programme. Each one of us is also part of the community and as members of the community, we want to contribute on a personal level.”

But with a bleak global economic outlook, it will be tough getting donations. In fact, Mrs Tay said it is “going to be a real challenge to keep on having enough funds. Thus, we have to keep thinking of how we can help the patients, using the help from the community”.

During the year-long campaign, NKF will appeal to other communities and residents to emulate Ang Mo Kio-Hougang constituency to adopt an A.K. through one-time or monthly donations to give “life” to kidney patients who could be their friends or neighbours.

“Together, we can help improve the lives of kidney patients and create a caring community,” added Mrs Tay.

Ways to donate towards the A.K. Fund

- The Singapore Buddhist Lodge allowed the NKF donation box to be placed at their premises for a short period of time during the Chinese New Year period and around $19,000 was raised.
- The now de-funct Satay Club Taxi Stand 7th Month Organisation decided to donate around $10,000 when they dissolved their organisation.
- Donors can also opt for monthly donations towards the A.K. Giver Fund.

For enquiries on how to donate an A.K., please contact us:

Phone: 6299 0200
Email: contact_us@nkfs.org
Website: www.nkfs.org
Advancing Care through Research

The NKF’s inaugural scientific meeting would not have been possible if not for its strong supporters like the Singapore Buddhist Welfare Services (SBWS) who believed in the importance of kidney research. It was this fervent belief that allowed The Venerable Yen Pei-NKF Research Fund to be set up in support of kidney-related research in both basic and clinical science. Through this Fund, a total of 71 grants have been awarded to principal investigators, scientists and healthcare professionals to carry out research in the field of renal diseases that will ultimately lead to better patient outcomes.

Held on 4 February 2012, the theme of the scientific meeting was “Advancing care through research”. About 200 participants listened to 10 oral presentations that were specially selected. Guest-of-Honour was Professor Tan Chorh Chuan, President of the National University of Singapore.

Mrs Eunice Tay, CEO of NKF, said, “NKF strongly believes that understanding the mechanisms of kidney diseases through quality research is critical for developing innovative treatments and for prevention.” She also stressed the importance of NKF to continue working in partnership with restructured hospitals, national centres, healthcare institutions, research funders and professional associations to support and advance renal research in Singapore.

The Learning Journey @ NKF

The Learning Journey to the Kidney Discovery Centre (KDC) is a fun and interactive experience for students! The Learning Journey takes them on a guided tour around KDC which showcases exciting and hands-on exhibits that offer both fun and facts. Along the way, students will learn about the kidneys and kidney failure, and will also be given the opportunity to contribute their ideas as scientists and inventors of our future.

Since the KDC started operations on 18 January 2011, over 4,000 primary, upper secondary and tertiary students and teachers, as well as, many organisations have visited the centre.

Find us on Facebook!

Do you know what can you do for your kidneys?

Kidney diseases are silent killers, which will largely affect your quality of life. However, there are several easy ways to reduce the risk of developing kidney disease.

You can find out these tips and more at our newly launched Facebook page – “Care for Our Kidneys”! Aimed at raising awareness about kidney health, this page is your one-stop educational portal to learn more about your amazing kidneys, useful tips and upcoming events.

Upon visiting our page, you will be greeted by our vibrant red and kidney-shaped logo, which represents our commitment to educate and provide you with relevant information on kidney healthcare.

So start increasing your kidney knowledge now and keep your kidneys in the pink of health!

Do ‘Like’ us and ‘Share’ our page among your family, friends and business partners now!
NKF’s Annual Volunteer Appreciation Celebration

It was a day of fun, laughter and bonding at NKF’s annual volunteer appreciation celebration cum Patients’ Active Day, held on 27 November 2011 at the NKF HQ. This event was held in conjunction with International Volunteer Day to recognise and commemorate the efforts and contributions of volunteers.

This carnival-like event also created an opportunity for NKF patients to participate actively in games and activities. And what better way to achieve this than for volunteers who have played a vital part in helping NKF patients all along, to join in the fun by adopting and running the 19 stalls. Hence, the theme of the event was “Hand in Hand”, symbolising the spirit of volunteerism in helping patients improve their quality of life.

A total of 527 patients, caregivers and volunteers participated in this event. Among the corporate volunteers who managed the stalls were BLC Community Services, Ci Yuan CC YEC and The Northern Trust Company. They were involved in the initial stage from planning and preparations to stall decoration. There was also a garage sale, free hair cut services to patients and a competition for the best decorated stall. Onstage activities included aerobics and karaoke.

Mr Yatiman Yusof, Chairman of the Volunteer Committee, presented awards to volunteers who went the extra mile for serving kidney patients.

Our generous sponsors:

- CooLien Ice-Cream Manufacturing Pte Ltd for 500 sticks of ice-cream and storage boxes
- J’Kids Amusement Pte Ltd for carnival equipment
- Nestle Singapore (Pte) Ltd for 2,000 cups of Milo