

# CONNECT

## Possible or impossible?

That's not the question.

Neither is it a testament to our true capability.

The greater power lies in our belief in ourselves.

*Patient Empowerment*



# 9

LIFE-SAVING CARE

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DAILY DOSE OF HEALTH

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Thank you for your steadfast support for our cause.

As we live in an endemic new normal after weathering the Covid-19 pandemic, we see another storm brewing – the alarming rise in chronic kidney disease (CKD). We need to tackle this enormous and longer-term challenge because the stark reality is that more than 300,000 people in Singapore are suffering from CKD, and possibly more remain undiagnosed due to its silent symptoms. There is an urgent and pressing need to scale up efforts across its entire spectrum – from awareness to prevention to early management.

We strongly encourage everyone to get screened so that prompt action can be taken when needed and, at the same time, make lifestyle modifications such as regular exercise, healthy diet, less consumption of alcohol and quitting smoking. In Caring for Your Kidneys, you can read about the many preventive healthcare community events we carried out to engage heartlanders to take charge of their health. While we reach out to the community, we also strive to collaborate even more closely with general practitioners and hospitals in a synergistic way to adopt integrated strategies in chronic kidney disease prevention and early detection and its continuum of care.

For those who are unfortunately afflicted with kidney failure, this burden carries significant psychosocial, physical and economic impact on patients and their families, as dialysis is a long-term care. Dialysis patients, more often than not, have to quit their jobs or reduce their work hours or responsibilities after starting dialysis. Financial stress will further lead to many psychological issues such as anxiety and depression, and loss of self-esteem may manifest.

Possible or impossible, it lies in our belief if we can do it or not. Especially so when patients are at the stage of experiencing turmoil and self-doubt, they tend to lose hope and their bearings in life. Patient empowerment can therefore be an effective tool to help patients get back on their feet.

We have put in place a Renal Rehabilitation Programme that focuses on the 5Es – Encouragement, Education, Exercise, Employment and Evaluation, which you can read more about in this issue. Through this comprehensive programme, we empower patients to take ownership of their lives including manage their condition independently for better outcomes and quality of life. This is one key area that is part of our Future Forward 2030 vision to bring about meaningful changes in our patients' lives.



Taking on a multidisciplinary, person-centric approach to provide continuum of care, our renal doctors and nurses work hand in hand with allied health professionals such as social workers, clinical psychologist, dietitians, therapists and exercise specialists. In partnership with the patient, caregiver and next-of-kin, the team helps to ensure seamless, effective and efficient care, so that the entire scope of a patient's health needs from prevention to the end of life is met.

In Life-saving Care, we highlight the story of Mr John Khang, who trained as a barista through NKF's patient employment programme. By contributing back to society, he has regained his sense of self-worth and looks ahead towards a purposeful life. You can also read about patient Mr Subhan Ali, who has taken up home-based peritoneal dialysis because it suits his lifestyle well and he feels assured that home support is at hand from NKF's care team of experienced PD nurses. With his flexible lifestyle, he is able to run a part-time home business with the cooking skills he has acquired to earn a living.

While we help our patients in all possible ways, our greater challenge is to ensure families do not go down the path that leads to kidney failure.

That is why each one of us has a vital part to play in reducing the burden and incidence of chronic kidney disease and preventing its onset. It starts with one taking the first step to get screened. Talk to your doctor today. It could save your life. ■

**Tim Oei**  
Chief Executive Officer



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# Stepping up efforts in chronic kidney disease prevention

It takes a whole-of-society to reduce the burden and incidence of Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) and prevent people from going down the path that leads to kidney failure. In conjunction with World Kidney Day on 9 March 2023, NKF organised a series of events to intensify our efforts in CKD education and prevention to benefit the public and the renal community.



## Creating a balance for a healthy mind and body

Many of us are constantly stressed and burned out from juggling many responsibilities in our busy lives. To reach out to families and caregivers in the Malay/Muslim community, NKF organised a forum on self-care titled 'Keseimbangan Untuk Kesihatan' (Balance for Health) at the Woodlands Regional Library on 19 February 2023 to share practical tips in achieving balance in mental and physical well-being. This, in turn, will help reduce the risks of chronic illnesses like kidney disease. The forum also brought together 22 Malay/Muslim organisations that have been partnering us to actively promote kidney health in the community.

**“Frequent and appropriate screenings are important because they can detect both of these conditions (diabetes and kidney disease) early, even before a person experiences any symptoms.”**

Madam Rahayu Mahzam, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Health & Ministry of Law, who was the guest of honour at the Malay health forum on self-care



## Make a stand, break the trend

After going virtual during the pandemic, Kidney We Care: Let's Revolutionise! (KWCLR) came back with a blast on 4 and 5 March 2023 at The Star Vista to rally the community to make a stand on breaking the rising trend of kidney failure cases by taking charge of their health. Helmed by volunteers and partners, the event created awareness on kidney disease prevention, with simple tips on healthier living habits and lifestyle changes. There were mass workouts, interactive games and performances by volunteers and partners. The guest of honour was Mr Eric Chua, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth & Ministry of Social and Family Development.



## Kampung spirit to encourage kidney health

In the spirit of one community, NKF set up a booth with a kampung ambience at the Geylang Serai Ramadan bazaar from 17 March to 18 April 2023 to encourage everyone to take charge of our health. It was also an opportunity for our dialysis patients to be there to contribute their handmade items such as calligraphy art pieces and beads paintings for sale. This helped to build their self-confidence and sense of self-worth, which are important towards achieving holistic wellness. This kidney health awareness effort reached out to over 10,000 members of the public. We thank Wisma Geylang Serai for sponsoring our booth. □





CARING FOR YOUR KIDNEYS

**A no sugary drinks challenge to make life sweeter**

In its sixth year running, the 7-Day No Sugary Drinks Challenge Charity Drive, which has been targeting youths at schools to encourage healthy dietary habits and inculcate the values of compassion and empathy through acts of service, also reached out to the heartlanders this year with its launch at Bukit Panjang Community Club on 19 March 2023. Residents were encouraged to replace sugary drinks with plain water and the money saved from giving up sugary drinks will go towards benefitting patients.

**“Very worthy and meaningful effort by NKF to encourage healthy dietary habits, as well as inculcate caring and empathetic values among us.”**



Mr Liang Eng Hwa, MP for Bukit Panjang SMC, who was the guest of honour at the event

**Racing towards better health**

Race inspired! returned this year to encourage a healthier lifestyle with a physical event at Waterway Point on 30 April 2023. Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, Speaker of Parliament, officially flagged off the run. A 3km Fun Walk and 6km Leisure Run attracted about 1,300 participants. There were also fun-filled health and carnival activities, and a special guest appearance by Mr Kiasu to drive home the message that you can never be too ‘kiasu’ about caring for your health. Funds raised through the event went towards helping kidney failure patients.



**“This run may just be for a day, but good health is a lifelong marathon for all. No matter how many healthy living or healthcare initiatives are rolled out, it is still up to each of us to take action to become healthier, and to remain in health. I hope everyone will pick up the baton of health, run with it, and pass it on to someone you care about.”**

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, Speaker of Parliament (right), who led the way for better health by participating in the 6km Leisure Run during Race Inspired!

**Re-thinking kidney care**

With a pressing need for a paradigm shift in delivering healthcare and empowering kidney patients to manage their condition, NKF’s 4<sup>th</sup> Kidney Care Conference was themed Re-thinking Kidney Care in Singapore. Held on 6 May 2023 at the NKF Centre, it covered multidisciplinary insights into the transformation and integration of CKD care for the future. More than 250 medical, nursing and allied healthcare professionals exchanged knowledge and best practices on renal care. The guest of honour was Mr Chan Yeng Kit, Permanent Secretary (Health), Ministry of Health, and the keynote speaker was Professor Thomas Coffman, Dean, Duke-NUS Medical School. ■

# We’re not kidding you!

Shayne (left) and Li Xuan

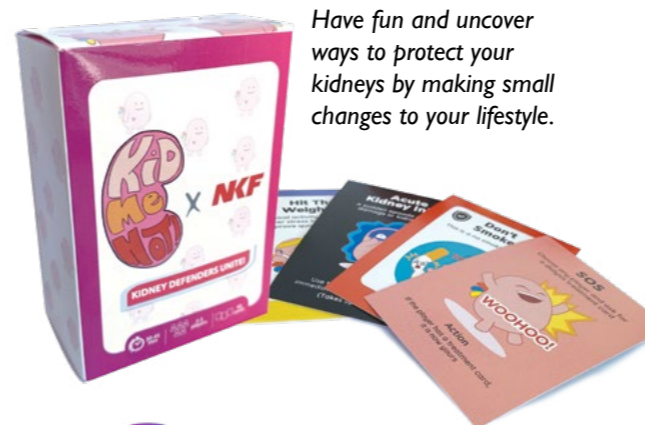


We are Shayne and Li Xuan from Raffles Institution (Junior College) and Anglo-Chinese Junior College, friends since secondary school and creators of Singapore’s first kidney card game called ‘Kid Me Not!’. We had created this game under NKF’s Kidney We Care (KWC) funding for ground-up projects.

This newly launched card game aims to educate the public on kidney health and chronic kidney disease (CKD). With the increasing incidence of diabetes, hypertension and consequently, CKD in Singapore, we hope to raise awareness about prevention and treatments. Just like Healthier SG, we hope this game encourages others to take action to improve their health and protect their kidneys! We also thought that it would be a great bonding opportunity for family and friends.

The card game makes learning about kidney health a lot more exciting! Follow @kidmenotgame to learn more about the game!

We hope that through this effort, we can give back to the community in a meaningful and tangible way and do our part towards a healthier Singapore. Have fun playing this game as much as we had fun creating it. ■



*Have fun and uncover ways to protect your kidneys by making small changes to your lifestyle.*



**Head over to their IG @kidmenotgame to redeem your deck**



**Keen to bridge the gap in kidney health education like Li Xuan and Shayne for a healthier Singapore?** Email us at [kidneywecare@nkfs.org](mailto:kidneywecare@nkfs.org) or scan the QR code to find out more about how you can apply for this funding.



[bit.ly/KidneyWeCare](https://bit.ly/KidneyWeCare)



LIFE-SAVING CARE



The Esserys left a legacy gift to four charities, which included the NKF.  
Photos: The Jo and Gerry Essery Estate

# Legacy gift that brings life and hope

The late Mr Gerry Essery and Mrs Jo Essery left more than \$13 million to four charities, including the NKF. It fulfilled their wishes to support the social causes which they cared for and held dear to their hearts during their lifetime.

Last year, we received the remaining half of our share of \$4 million, which will go towards providing dialysis treatment and care to more than 5,300 NKF patients and beneficiaries in financial need.

The first \$2 million which we received in 2016 was used to establish The Jo & Gerry Essery-NKF Dialysis Centre in Marsiling. It is one of the largest dialysis centres in the north of Singapore and treats up to 132 patients. It was also one of the first centres to pilot self-care management under the renal rehabilitation programme, where patients measure their own weight, check their vital signs and set up the things needed for dialysis.

Mr Gerry Essery who was an accountant, and his wife Jo, a housewife, became Singaporeans in the 1970s. Mrs Essery died in 2013 at the age of 89, while Mr Essery was 92 when he died in 2015.

Retired veterinarian Dr Tan Hwa Luck, a good friend of the Essery couple and executor of their estate, said, "Jo and Gerry were always generous with not just money but also their hearts. Growing up with little meant that they saw the needs often overlooked by many."

The other three beneficiaries were Assisi Hospice, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and the Garden City Fund. A Burmese Banyan heritage tree, which is located at Swan Lake in the Singapore Botanic Gardens, has been dedicated to the generous couple. ■

**"From the bottom of our hearts, we thank Jo and Gerry for their generosity and heart for kidney failure patients, who have to bear the physical and financial burden of life-long dialysis to sustain their lives. This legacy gift from Jo and Gerry will go a long way in advancing NKF's vision and mission of Giving Life & Hope, helping us to do more and do better in renal care."**

Mr Arthur Lang  
Chairman of NKF

# Empowering patients to turn the impossible into possible

Having a chronic illness like kidney failure, patients need to go on lifelong dialysis to sustain their lives, and it is a life-changing experience at multiple levels. They are overwhelmed with sadness, anger, anxiety, depression and financial difficulties due to job loss. This is coupled with the disruptions to their daily lives, time and physical toll that dialysis treatments have on them.

To help patients overcome these barriers, many studies have shown that self-care is an imperative tool in engaging and empowering patients, especially in the long-term care and chronic diseases setting, which results in better treatment outcomes and quality of life. Once patients are allowed to make autonomous decisions and embrace proactive self-care behaviours such as monitoring their conditions independently, following doctor's prescription and advice, eating right and exercising when appropriate, their treatment outcomes are likely to improve.

As such, NKF has a comprehensive renal rehabilitation programme that focuses on the 5Es, which is an essential part in empowering dialysis patients to take ownership of their long-term dialysis care journey and manage their dialysis treatment and its associated complications.

Encouragement	Education	Exercise	Employment	Evaluation
Through centre-based activities, patients develop a strong culture and "kampung spirit" through social interactions. Patient buddies are encouraged to take the lead and influence other patients to do the same.	The more patients learn about their illness and its treatment, the better they will be able to manage it.	Patients exercise regularly to get more energy and make their general health and outlook better.	Patients strive to keep their jobs to build their self-esteem, identity, independence and sense of accomplishment.	The outcome of the programme will be determined through the Kidney Disease Quality of Life (KDQOL) evaluation, which assesses patients' quality of life before and after the programme.

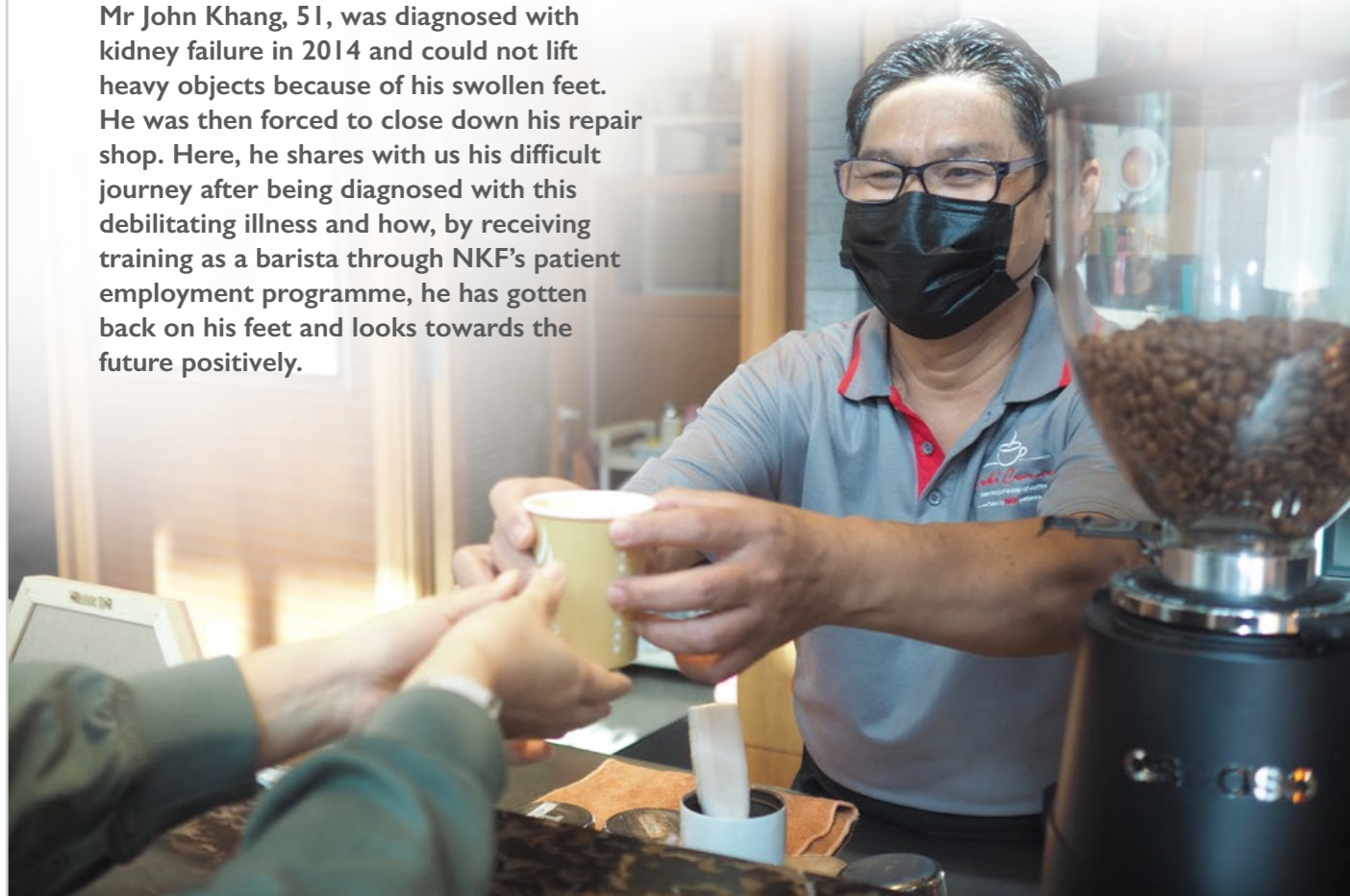
Through this integrated approach in dialysis treatment and holistic care, dialysis patients are able to get back on their feet, lead fulfilling lives, contribute to families and the society. ■





# Self-worth keeps me going

Mr John Khang, 51, was diagnosed with kidney failure in 2014 and could not lift heavy objects because of his swollen feet. He was then forced to close down his repair shop. Here, he shares with us his difficult journey after being diagnosed with this debilitating illness and how, by receiving training as a barista through NKF's patient employment programme, he has gotten back on his feet and looks towards the future positively.



In my younger days, I ate a lot of fast food, did not watch my salt intake and disliked eating vegetables. As early as my 20s, I already had high blood pressure. When I was struck down with kidney failure, I felt dejected and was at a loss as to what to do. My first thoughts were one of pain and fear. When I was on dialysis, breathing was harder, and I experienced cramps at the start of dialysis, as my body needed time to adjust. I easily lost my temper with my wife and daughter. The diagnosis also affected my family's emotions as everyone got more uptight, especially as I could not find work easily and contribute to the family. Our frustrations kept piling up.

**"I encourage other patients to be independent and be empowered to go out and find a job. When you contribute to society, you will have a sense of self-worth."**

Mr John Khang, who is benefitting from NKF's employment programme



## My struggles to earn a living

I had to shut down my repair shop business which I ran for six years and took up part-time jobs. I was under great pressure at that time and sought counselling from a psychologist. What was most unbearable to me was the gossip from colleagues who did not understand that I had to leave work early for dialysis – they questioned why I did not have to do the menial work of moving goods when everyone was getting the same salary. Since I was earning much lesser working part-time, my financial situation was affected. My wife had to shoulder the burden as the main breadwinner. I am grateful for the subsidised dialysis treatment from NKF which helped ease my financial burden greatly.

## Realising my self-worth

I slowly began to adapt to my health condition and became a patient advocate, where I had the chance to interact with other patients. I even sang and performed for other patients during such sessions at the dialysis centres.

One day, when I was at the NKF headquarters, I noticed patient baristas at the lobby brewing coffee at Kaki Corner and it got me interested. I asked one of them whether I could join and subsequently applied for it. I went through the training and started working there since last year.

My fellow patient baristas and I will share with one another about what to eat before dialysis, and which part of the dialysis procedure is more painful and how to cope with it – these are all topics that I have struggled to talk about in other jobs previously. Now I look forward to communicating with colleagues who share the same experiences every time I go to work. My mental burden has lightened, and my family can set their mind at ease in letting me come out to work. I recently completed 100 hours of internship at Kong Café under Kaki Corner's training programme to improve my barista and customer service skills. They have since employed me on a part-time basis.

## Taking each day as it comes

Nowadays, I spend much of my free time with my family like watching movies at home or bringing my daughter out to eat. I had also taken English classes to improve my English as well as baking classes. I encourage other patients to be independent and be empowered to go out and find a job. When you contribute to society, you will have a sense of self-worth. I treasure each day to its fullest. ■



## Empowering patients through employment programme

Since the recruitment of the first batch of patient employees for the programme last November, 15 patients have joined the programme and received professional barista and food hygiene training.

These patients will first accumulate at least 20 hours of work at Kaki Corner, with their wages being funded by NKF. After which, they will get to intern at a local café that has partnered with NKF for about 100 hours. The patient can then decide whether to return to work at Kaki Corner or stay on at the partner café if there is a job opening.

NKF currently partners with eight cafés. By doing so, it hopes to improve employers' understanding of dialysis patients through such collaboration and help more patients become self-reliant. To recruit more patients, social workers of each dialysis centre will look out for patients who are willing to work, and then the team overseeing Kaki Corner will assess the patients' ability, so as to ensure that they do not have problems like severe dizziness or trembling hands.



**NKF's Kaki Corner opens from Monday to Friday, 8am to 3pm.**  
The coffee beans and other materials here are sponsored by donors, and the public can pay any amount as they wish.





## Home dialysis suits my lifestyle

Mr Subhan Ali heads to the market in the mornings on certain days of the week to get the fresh ingredients that he needs to do his cooking at home, which is something that he is very passionate about. And this 53-year-old enterprising man has turned the cooking skills he has acquired into a part-time home business to earn a living.

He cooks a variety of local Malay cuisines like beef rendang, ayam masak merah (spicy tangy chicken), cucur ikan bilis (anchovy fritters) and serunding (spicy coconut floss), just to name a few, to fulfil the orders that he gets regularly. He used to hold cooking sessions for relatives, friends and anyone interested in learning to cook until he had to stop doing so due to the prolonged Covid pandemic. He hopes to resume these sessions now that it is over.

Other than cooking, Subhan enjoys travelling. He has been to places like Indonesia, Australia, Japan, Turkey and the United States.

### Afflicted with kidney failure

Subhan, who has been suffering from diabetes and hypertension since he was a youth, was diagnosed with kidney failure about four years ago and needed dialysis to sustain his life. He was worried about how dialysis would affect his lifestyle.

His doctor told him about the benefits of the two dialysis treatment modalities that he was medically-suited for – home-based peritoneal dialysis (PD) and in-centre haemodialysis (HD), carried out in-centre at a community-based dialysis centre.

### Weighing up his treatment options

After weighing the pros and cons and doing his own fact-finding on the two treatments, he decided to take up PD as it fits well into his lifestyle. The type of PD he undertakes is called Automated Peritoneal Dialysis, where he does it daily during the night for 10 hours while he sleeps. This enables him to do his cooking during the day without much disruption.

“If I had taken up HD, I would have to spend time travelling to and fro between my home and dialysis centre thrice weekly, and spend four hours each time for treatment,” said Subhan. “I cannot afford the time to do so during the day and will feel tired from the travelling. I also hate needles poked into me, which is needed for HD sessions. PD is needle-free.”

PD also gives him the opportunity to continue with his travel adventures. The PD solution which he needs for his treatment, is delivered to his hotel room for his convenience.

“PD allows me to have greater flexibility,” added Subhan. “I’m able to pursue my passion for cooking and travelling. I find these activities therapeutic, relaxing and calming. They also keep me busy and take my mind off my sickness.”

### PD support readily available

An NKF PD nurse makes visits to his home to check on his condition, gives advice on coping strategies and ensures he is managing his treatment well. This gives him peace of mind and a sense of assurance that there is always support readily available.

Subhan has opened his home to newly diagnosed kidney failure patients who are deciding on which treatment option to take up. He shares with these pre-dialysis patients on overcoming issues encountered when doing PD at home, demonstrates the use of the PD belt, which helps to secure the catheter (dialysis tube), and shows them how to arrange and store consumables safely and neatly.

Subhan is a member of NKF’s PD Support Group that call themselves the PD Warriors, as they keep the fighting spirit in them strong to overcome the many challenges they face. They share their personal experiences and feelings, as well as encourage each other. This helps them in their journey towards healing.

For Subhan, he continues to keep a positive mindset and strives to live his life to the fullest. ■

“PD allows me to have greater flexibility. I’m able to pursue my passion for cooking and travelling. I find these activities therapeutic, relaxing and calming. They also keep me busy and take my mind off my sickness.”

Mr Subhan Ali, who is coping well on peritoneal dialysis



# Refurbishing older dialysis centres to meet growing demand

NKF's community-based dialysis centres that are 20 years or older will be refurbished by 2030. Between eight and 10 centres will be renovated in phases, with better-designed spaces and latest technology to improve the patient experience. The upgrades will also help care teams be prepared for future pandemics and meet the increasing demand for dialysis.

Our oldest and the first community-based dialysis centre in Singapore located at Toa Payoh Lorong 8, which is 36 years old, recently underwent a major refurbishment with a \$2.2 million donation from our long-standing community partner, Toa Payoh Seu Teck Sean Tong.

**“Health is a personal responsibility. It’s important for us to raise public awareness and strengthen upstream preventive measures to reduce risk factors, especially diabetes, hypertension and high blood pressure, which are leading causes of kidney failure.”**

Mr Saktiandi Supaat, an MP for Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC, who encouraged Singaporeans to care for their kidneys



One significant change was the centre doubling its capacity from 14 to 28 dialysis stations and enabling it to serve 168 patients each week, up from 84 previously. The new air-conditioning system removes airborne pollutants and allergens, creating a healthier environment for patients with respiratory issues and allergies. The centre also installed a facial recognition system that provides patients a contactless way to enter and prevents entry of unauthorised personnel. The device also has a wide-angle lens that can detect those in a wheelchair or using a personal mobility aid.

In 1995, the temple donated \$1.5 million to NKF to set up a dialysis centre in Yishun, and contributes regularly to patient care, organises social outings and distributes household items to them. ■



Our newly refurbished dialysis centre in Toa Payoh was officially opened by Mr Saktiandi Supaat, MP for Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC (third from left) and Mr Yeo Siow Guan, chairman of Toa Payoh Seu Teck Sean Tong (third from right), on 12 March 2023.

# A strategic collaboration with Tzu-Chi for better renal care

NKF collaborated with Tzu-Chi Foundation (TCF) to provide training to its first batch of nurses and staff and equip them with the necessary knowledge and skill sets to operate its flagship community-based dialysis centre at Buangkok. This strategic partnership between the two charitable foundations is a vital move in ensuring that no kidney failure patient in Singapore is deprived of dialysis, in the light of the number of kidney failure cases rising at an alarming pace in Singapore.

NKF undertook the design and curation of a training programme that consists of knowledge sharing, on-site training and consultation in the areas of infrastructure, operations and administration. Clinical staff who benefitted from the training included qualified and experienced nurses registered with the Singapore Nursing Board, and non-clinical staff such as social workers, physiotherapists and support staff.

The wide-ranging scope of training – both on-the-job and classroom sessions – included understanding and learning of basic equipment and manpower requirements; space and dialysis slots planning, including considerations for setting up designated dialysis stations for hepatitis B patients; licensing inspection preparation and processes; and admission, placement and orientation processes for new patients, among others.

The training programme was carried out over six weeks from last April. In the spirit of community partnership, NKF waived the training costs.

This purposeful partnership augurs well for the future, where charities with similar humanitarian ideals work hand in hand for the common good of society. ■

**“What better way to reciprocate Tzu-Chi’s strong conviction to save more kidney failure patients’ lives than to work closely with them and share our knowhow and expertise in dialysis operations and care through this collaboration.”**

Mr Tim Oei, CEO of NKF



(From left) NKF senior director of corporate services Chia Miang Yeow and NKF CEO Tim Oei, with TCF CEO Low Swee Seh and TCF charity development department head Khoo Jyh Hao, at the memorandum of understanding ceremony on 29 March 2023.

Photo: Tzu-Chi Foundation (Singapore)

**“Through this latest collaboration, it will help strengthen our capabilities in running the dialysis centre and hopefully, we can play our part in supporting the overall renal landscape.”**

Mr Low Swee Seh, CEO of TCF



# Two volunteer leaders with a shared mission

NKF's volunteer committee, led by Ms Pratibha Kurnool (front row, centre) and Dr Tim Xu (front row, right), at a workplan retreat. They hope to better support volunteers and patients in their journey with NKF.



It was not an unfamiliar sight to see a sea of blue shirts thronging NKF's event grounds. These are Cognizant's staff volunteering their time to support NKF's events. Since 2017, Cognizant's volunteers have mobilised teams to support events such as the Kidney Care Conference and Flag Days, visited the dialysis centres to bring joy and warmth to patients, and so much more. Cognizant's footprints are everywhere. Most recently, one of Cognizant's staff, under the training and tutelage of NKF's Dietetics team, conducted an in-house health talk to advocate healthy eating. To-date, more than 100 Cognizant staff have volunteered with NKF and actively advocate NKF's cause.

"Cognizant's staff are quite familiar with NKF as they have helped at NKF's events for several years," said Ms Pratibha Kurnool, Head of Global Community Impact and APAC Lead, ESG – Outreach, Cognizant. "In 2019, when NKF was seeking volunteers to organise anniversary celebrations at their dialysis centres, I thought it opportune to expose them to NKF's patients so that they could meet the people they have been indirectly helping. The experience proved to be an extremely impactful one as many were touched by the interactions and realised the importance of keeping themselves healthy. This further entrenched Cognizant to NKF and propelled our partnership in giving life and hope to NKF's patients."

For Dr Tim Xu, his journey started with stumbling into NKF's office. In a literal sense. A passionate advocate for heightening awareness of fall risks in the community, Dr Xu, an experienced occupational therapist and an assistant professor at the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), was illustrating to the Volunteer Management team how to reduce the extent of injuries through simple body manoeuvres. This started a beautiful five-year partnership between NKF and SIT. Not only did he provide guidance in the formation of the Fall Prevention Programme in NKF, he also mobilised and trained his students to be fall risk ambassadors to perform home visits to help reduce fall hazards in patients' homes. He was a guest speaker during the Fall Prevention Awareness Week in 2019 and in June last year, started a series of activity surveys at three dialysis centres to assess patients' needs so as to curate programmes that would be more attuned to their interests and abilities. More than 100 SIT students have been involved in NKF's programmes to-date.

"Reducing community frailty is a collective effort. Especially for NKF's patients who are immunocompromised and exhibit higher frailty due to their health challenges, reducing their fall risks is an important component to helping them remain independent in self-care and lead a reasonable quality of life. By having our students involved in the programmes we run with NKF, we can imbue and inculcate a sense of empathy in them and allow them the platform to exercise what they have learnt in theory in school. We hope that through such exposures, we can have more community therapists in future to help support the sick and frail."

Today, both Pratibha and Dr Xu have taken on a much larger role with NKF. Appointed as the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of NKF's Volunteer Committee (VC) respectively, they are on a mission to help steer the future direction of volunteerism in NKF. "As a VC, we want to understand what the unmet needs are in the post-covid world and how we can better support volunteers and patients in their journey," says Pratibha, who is taking on this responsibility outside of her Cognizant responsibilities. ■



Pratibha facilitating a focus group discussion with NKF volunteers.



# Planting the seeds for better health

“I hope that my outreach efforts will go a long way in encouraging people to take care of their health and reduce the burden of chronic illnesses like kidney disease.”

Ms Norazlina Wagiman, who finds her work truly fulfilling



For Ms Norazlina Wagiman, 44, who is part of NKF's outreach team, educating people on the importance of caring for their kidneys and staying healthy gives her a tremendous sense of fulfilment. Here, she shares her thoughts on what inspires her in wanting to make a difference in someone's health and the work she is so passionate about.

I spent a lot of time growing up with my uncles and aunts when I was younger. So, my heart sank when one of my favourite uncles passed away in 2017 from kidney failure due to his uncontrolled diabetes. My family has a medical history of diabetes, and my mother was diagnosed with this condition as well. This worries me a lot. Through these episodes, I finally understood the importance of controlling chronic illnesses such as diabetes and hypertension, which can damage the kidneys. I decided to tweak my lifestyle, especially in adopting healthier eating habits to stay healthy.

## More than just a job

When I had the opportunity to join and lead kidney health outreach efforts in the Malay/Muslim community five years ago, I accepted it without hesitation because I see this as a job with a meaningful purpose. However, helping to spread awareness of chronic kidney disease and prevention in the community is a mammoth task. All of us at NKF cannot do it alone. Much of my work revolves around

gathering support and establishing strong partnerships with various Malay/Muslim organisations, mosques and voluntary welfare organisations within the Malay community to help enhance this awareness.

Through active networking and sharing sessions, I have come to understand our partners better, their needs and limitations, and how we can complement and collaborate with each other to effectively reach out to the community. I am happy to share that we now have 36 corporate and community partners that are always supportive towards NKF's outreach initiatives. I have even been given the nickname 'Kakak Ginjal' (Kidney Sister) by a few mosques that I am working with!



## Work adventures that get me going!

I am most happy when conducting public awareness talks. I conduct talks and forums in mosques, community centres and neighbourhood libraries, as well as organise events with interactive booths such as Ramadan Bazaar. Together with my outreach colleagues, we share key information on diabetes and hypertension, and adopting a healthier lifestyle with tips on cutting down on sugar and salt, as well as exercising regularly.

Amid my daily work, I try to find time to befriend a few kidney failure patients every month. Talking to them and their caregivers helps me understand their challenges better. There are moments when I try hard to hold back my tears listening to their pains and struggles, but at times, I end up crying with them! Their poignant stories remind me of the fragility of life, and that we must do our best to stay healthy for ourselves and our loved ones too.

While work can of course be challenging, I feel that what I am doing is certainly meaningful and fun too. Through outreach events and activities, I get to meet and converse with people from all walks of life. And seeing them come forward with questions on how they can better manage their kidney health and being inspired to take baby steps to achieve a healthier life, truly gives me fulfilment and satisfaction.

## Walk the talk

I am also grateful to have helpful colleagues and volunteers who readily extend their help when the need arises. When I bump into old friends and ex-colleagues, I always receive comments such as “I can really see that you are enjoying your work”. I cannot agree more! I cannot be an advocator of good health if I do not walk the talk. With that said, I do my best to keep healthy by participating in outdoor activities like urban and jungle trekking with my friends, and constantly eat clean.

I hope that with my efforts to educate and encourage people in the community to take charge of their health, as well as for my own family to stay healthy, we can all do our part to break the cycle of chronic illnesses like kidney disease! ■



# Debunking the salt and sodium myths!

Sodium and salt are often being used interchangeably, but they are not the same. Sodium is an essential mineral that your body needs as maintains fluid balance, regulates blood pressure and keeps muscle and nerves functioning normally. On the other hand, salt, also known as sodium chloride, is a crystal-like chemical compound that is made up of 40 per cent sodium and 60 per cent chloride. It is often added to food as a flavour enhancer and used for food preservative.

Findings from National Nutrition Survey 2018/2019 revealed that 90% of Singaporeans consumed an average of 3,600mg of sodium a day (9g of salt). This is almost double of the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommended daily limit of less than 2,000mg of sodium a day.

Excessive sodium intake leads to increased risk of hypertension, which is one of the major risk factors for chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke and kidney failure. Singapore launched the new nationwide sodium reduction campaign last year, which aims to reduce Singaporean's daily sodium consumption by 15 per cent over the next five years. To aid in achieving this, let us debunk some common myths of sodium and salt together!

**Myth 1:**  
**Sodium can only be found in salt and sauces**

Sodium is often added during food preparation to enhance flavour, improve texture and extend its shelf life. Most people often think that sodium only comes from salt and seasoning, but in fact a large amount of sodium can also be hidden in processed food such as instant noodles, processed meats or food like fish ball and fishcake, savoury snacks, canned food, preserved food and convenience meals.

One can learn how to purchase a lower sodium food item by reading the nutrition labels on the food packaging. Look out for the amount of sodium listed under 'per 100g/ml' column on the nutrition information panel (NIP) when comparing sodium content of two similar food items. However, be mindful of the serving size as you will consume more sodium if you eat more than the listed serving size. Alternatively, look out for products that are labelled with the Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS) logo for lower sodium options.



Contains at least 25% less sodium compared to similar products in the same category



Contains no additional sodium added to the product



**Myth 2:**  
**Himalayan/pink salt/sea salt is nutritionally better than regular table salt**

You might have seen varieties of salt advertised as having extra health benefits like they are nutritionally better as it contains extra minerals that are good for your body. In fact, all types of salt such as Himalayan salt, pink salt, sea salt and more, contain around 40 per cent of sodium, just like the regular table salt. They may differ in some trace minerals, but they are only present in small amounts. Nevertheless, it is best to still consume salt in moderation.



**Myth 3:**  
**Monosodium glutamate (MSG) is worse than salt**

You've probably heard of MSG being bad for you. Is this true? MSG is produced by fermentation of corn, sugar beets, sugar cane or molasses. It is also naturally occurring in some food such as tomato, cheese and meats. Like salt, MSG is often used as a flavour enhancer which makes food taste better as it delivers an 'umami' or savoury meaty flavour. Although MSG is often mistakenly thought of as being high in sodium, it actually contains just one-third the sodium of table salt. If you are keen to use MSG to enhance your dish, do keep in mind to still use it as the only source of flavour enhancer for the dish and in moderation as it does contain sodium as well!



Source: Health Promotion Board

**Myth 4:**  
**Food without added salt or contains less salt is usually bland and tasteless**

Food can still taste great and delicious without added salt or using less salt. This can be done by simply using natural ingredients to enhance the taste and flavour of dishes during meal preparation. For example:

- Corn, onions and carrots provide sweetness to dishes
- Chilies, peppers and ginger provide hotness and spiciness to food
- Garlic, onions, spring onions, and lemongrass boost the flavour and aroma to dishes
- Lemon, lime and other citrus fruits work well in marinades as well as for salad dressing and dipping sauces
- Tomatoes, mushrooms, cheese, seaweed and kelp give 'umami' flavour to dishes
- Natural herbs and spices like cumin, turmeric and coriander enhance flavour in marinades and curry dishes

Our taste buds will adjust and regain its sensitivity to salt and other flavours after cutting down on salt intake gradually. You will be surprised that you will crave for less salty food and enjoy more flavours in the natural foods after two to three weeks. ■



# HIIT-ing the spot with exercise



With the launch of 'Healthier SG' in 2022, Singapore has seen a shift in focus to preventive healthcare – similar to NKF's continued efforts in upstream education and prevention of kidney disease. The new strategy underscores the crucial role that exercise plays in proactive prevention efforts, in order to ensure that the balance is not tipped towards just caring for people whose health has already been compromised.

Research data has proven the importance and effectiveness of exercise in early prevention of chronic diseases such as kidney disease. Through regular exercise and a proper diet, an average person can better control their body weight, blood sugar and blood pressure levels in the long run. One type of exercise we can explore is high intensity interval training (HIIT).

## What is HIIT?

HIIT is a form of training that requires one to perform at maximum ability for a short burst of time before taking a short break. As this type of exercise targets physiological health such as muscular strength and cardiovascular fitness, it can help to reduce the risk of diabetes and hypertension. Compared to traditional training, more energy is expended within a shorter period of time during HIIT, making it an effective alternative.

### Recommended – 1:2 HIIT\*

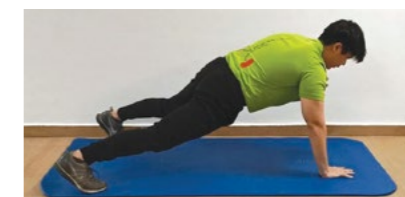
1:2 Exercise to Rest Ratio	30 Seconds Exercise to 60 Seconds Rest Ratio	Repeat 3 – 5 times
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*\* For inexperienced individuals, a longer rest time is recommended. This is dependent on the individual's current fitness level. If you have any medical condition, please do not attempt HIIT without consulting your doctor and exercise specialist first.*



## Alternate Lunges

1. Start off with your feet at hip-width apart, you can have your hands in front of you for balance
2. Step forward (slightly longer than your normal walking step), while the other foot remains at the same position
3. Bend your knees to 90 degrees before returning to starting position, repeat on the other leg
4. Keep your back straight throughout the repetitions
5. Repeat until the set is complete



## High Plank Shoulder Tap

1. Start off with a high plank position, shoulders above your hands
2. Make sure your arms are placed at shoulder-width apart
3. Keep your back straight and maintain that position throughout the repetitions
4. Lift one hand off the floor and tap the opposite shoulder, and repeat on the other hand
5. Repeat until the set is complete



## Mountain Climbers

1. Start off with a high plank position, shoulders above your hands
2. Make sure your arms are placed at shoulder-width apart
3. Keep your back straight and maintain that position throughout the repetitions
4. Drive one of your knees towards your chest and repeat with other leg continuously
5. Repeat until the set is complete





# SWING FOR HOPE

**NKF Charity Golf 2023**

**11 August 2023, Friday**

**Tanah Merah Country Club (Tampines Course)**

**Registration & Lunch : 11am | Shotgun Start: 1.15pm | Dinner: 7pm**

**Swing For Hope is back for the third year running,  
so get your clubs ready for a full day of exciting golf!**

**Guest of Honour  
Professor S. Jayakumar  
Former Deputy Prime Minister and Senior Minister**

**Let's Swing for Hope together!**

**Golf packages  
start from  
\$8,000**

*All funds raised will go towards supporting kidney failure patients to alleviate their financial burden. Your donation will be entitled to a tax-deduction of 2.5 times the donated amount.*



For queries: [fr\\_events@nkfs.org](mailto:fr_events@nkfs.org) | 6506 2280

**Join us!**