

DSS Mobile Clinic Diary Excuses of the worst kind

by **Chionh Lay Keng**, Diabetes Nurse Educator,
Diabetic Society of Singapore



**I have no time.
I cannot take leave.
I am busy.**

As a diabetes nurse educator working in the DSS mobile clinic, I have heard these excuses all too often. I cringe each time I hear them. Because as a diabetes nurse educator, I have also done countless diabetes eye and feet screenings for patients who are undergoing renal dialysis. The fallout is not pretty.

Ninety eight percent of these diabetes patients undergoing dialysis have severe nerve damage, peripheral arterial disease (blockage of the lower limbs which can lead to amputation). Many have reached this stage because of those three excuses.

It saddens me to see so many people, even those as young as 20 years old, with kidney failure. Undergoing dialysis three times a week, four to five hours per session, close to 15 hours a week, can adversely affect one's quality of life. Many patients cannot get a job while some have younger kids to take care of but are unable to do so because of their weak health.

It is even more heartrending when, in many of these cases, kidney failure could have been avoided - if the patients had only heeded their doctors' advice to switch to insulin therapy when oral diabetes medications or strict dietary controls and exercise were no longer effective or enough.

By the time complications set in, it would be too late to turn back the clock. Renal dialysis is a lifelong commitment. The dire consequences are just not worth procrastinating treatment for. So, instead of making excuses, try doing these three things:

**Make time.
Take leave.**

See a doctor or visit any of our diabetes education & care centres to speak to a diabetes nurse educator:

DSS HQ @ Bedok

Blk 141 Bedok Reservoir Road
#01-1529 Singapore 470141
Tel:68426019

Hong Kah Diabetes Education & Care Centre

Blk 528 Jurong West St 52
#01-353 Singapore 640528
Tel:65649819

Central Singapore Diabetes Education & Care Centre

Blk 22 Boon Keng Road
#01-15 Singapore 330022
Tel:63980282

Checklist for people with diabetes:

1. Is your HbA1c less than 7% every 3 months?
2. Do you do self-blood glucose monitoring frequently?
3. Do you do your kidney test yearly? This is important to assess if your kidneys are functioning normally.
4. Do you attend your complications screening yearly?
5. Do you attend diabetes self care management classes or individual diabetes education?

Based on statistics by National Kidney Foundation, "more than 600 people succumb to kidney failure every year. Currently, there are over 3,000 kidney patients in Singapore, with the number expected to double in 2010. Statistics have shown that out of these newly diagnosed kidney cases, 50% were caused by diabetes and 9% by hypertension. In Singapore, diabetes has also been identified as the sixth most common cause of death followed by kidney failure which ranks seventh. The tragedy is that the majority of these patients did not have to suffer the pain of dialysis as their conditions could have been prevented."