



Benaiah Hoong

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### Walk in HortPark



A cooling and breezy morning, with dew hanging on the tips of the leaves, not knowing at exactly what moment they will make their drop to earth, joining nature in her ceaseless cycle, so full of energy and life.

Members of the Diabetes Support Group (DSG), eager and young at heart, gathered at the Hortpark Centre. They were accompanied by a group of secondary four students, still half asleep from waking up far too early on a school holiday. Some may call this as an unlikely pairing, but this is where the story of new friendships and knowledge begins.

A single bead of crimson blood rested on his finger, like the drops of dew resting on the leaves around us. The blood was drawn up into a small device. Within a few seconds, the sugar concentration of his blood appeared on the screen. For some, it was a moment to be proud, when they saw a number within the healthy range. For others, it was a gentle reminder to keep the blood sugar level in check.

Juliana, the leader of the walk, welcomed everyone, briefed us on what to expect in the journey ahead and walked on holding a DSG sign up high. Trailing behind, Uncle Jimmy and I talked about all sorts of things. What could a 66-year-old man and a 16-year-old youth have in common? Truth is, all it takes is a little

time to discover how much we have in common. The topic of our conversation went from school life, to our hobbies, to managing diabetes, and before we knew it, we arrived at our first checkpoint at Labrador MRT station.

This was where I was exposed to the hard truths of managing diabetes in Singapore's healthcare system. Florence, the social worker who introduced the various financial schemes available, also highlighted the importance of emotional support when managing this illness.

The atmosphere got a little tense when the ugly truths about the shortcomings of the healthcare system surfaced. Many elderly expressed concern about the \$400 annual limit on care which does not require hospitalisation. How could the government provide people with affordable healthcare while ensuring their Medisave accounts do not run dry? While I acknowledge Singapore's extensive, multi-tiered healthcare system has benefitted many, we cannot ignore the pressing concerns put forward by those affected.

However, we refused to let this unresolved issue mar our day. Nature has its way of planting joy in our hearts. Spotting a tiny squirrel climbing a tree right above our heads, everyone watched in awe as its nimble limbs propelled it from branch to branch. It was so light

on its feet, as if performing a rhythmic dance.

At the end point, we gathered to take photos and enjoy the picturesque view of waters gently striking the rocks along the shore and palm trees swaying in the wind, backed by a light blue sky and puffy white clouds.

But the loveliest sight had to be Aru, a diabetic for many years, and his wife, a non-diabetic. She accompanied him on the walk, taking part in the blood tests as well, showing the utmost support and love for her husband. Together, they have turned diabetes into an opportunity to revamp their lifestyle and overcome this challenge as a family. A warm, fuzzy feeling arose in my heart. Indeed, love transcends all boundaries.

This walk has provided me with an insight into how diabetes has affected people. No man is an island. We must unite as a community, providing support in any way possible, to eventually conquer diabetes.

Thank you, DSG, for this amazing and inspiring experience. And to those who may be struggling or have a loved one struggling with an illness, be strong and live boldly. Through all the trials and challenges, remember to live, laugh and love, for that is, I believe, the ultimate triumph.