

Finding hope after cancer

SHUKRY B MOHD NOR
Patient

En. Shukry is one of those people fortunate enough to be able to make a living doing what he enjoys most. His hobby is to fix things. So he went on to become the repairman in the neighbourhood. "I was a mechanic before. I never studied for it. I learned to fix things on my own. I thank God for blessing me with that ability." But his work-hobby took a backseat when life suddenly took a different turn. "I started feeling tired very easily," En. Shukry recalls. "I'd push the motorbike from just here to there and I'd be gasping for breath. So I went to Hospital Kuala Lumpur for a check-up. And on the 4th visit they found out from a blood sample they took that I had AML (Acute Myeloid Leukemia).

"I was shattered. I felt so down, it was like I got cut off from life. Cancer doesn't just damage your body. It also messes up your mind," En. Shukry comments. "I became an angry man. I was lashing out at everyone all the time, including my family. I got very sensitive with what people said and did. I couldn't tolerate noise." He also couldn't bear being alone either. He'd get all nervous when his wife would leave his side even for just a while. "I was panicking a lot. I'd shiver. I was also suicidal. Chemo also made it worse for me as it left me feeling drained. I'd spend my days thinking all sorts of nonsense, like I wanted to knock my head on the wall or jump out of the car."

After a few cycles of chemo, it was found that his cancer had spread to his spine. He could not walk and was in pain and bedridden. It was then that En. Shukry was referred to Hospis Malaysia.

Nurse Wong visited regularly and took care of his pain. Soon he was able to sit up. Then she referred him to Hospis Malaysia's rehab sessions at their centre. He felt that going to Hospis Malaysia meant at least there was someone who took interest in his case. "It made me feel special." En. Shukry says with a chuckle. "I actually felt happy going there. I found myself in the company of other patients in a similar situation. That was comforting."



Shukry feeling at home

He started to learn how to manage himself physically, with the most important being the ability to walk. "My nerves were badly affected. Hospis' staff taught me how to walk without falling. I had a routine and that kept me focused and calm. The structure in my life made me feel in control. I was also kept so occupied, I had no time to think of my problems. Soon I started to move by myself. From being bedridden, I progressed to a wheelchair and then a 4-legged walker. And now this," En. Shukry says as he taps his cane, beaming with pride. All that in a span of 4 months.

In the time he spent at Hospis Malaysia, he's made a few friends. It wasn't just patients whom he got to know. He speaks fondly of the nurses and volunteers too and even commends them as "best!". Nurse Wong still visits him every fortnight to check on his well-being and addresses any physical symptoms he has, with advice and an ever-willing ear. "The ways she showed me helped me manage my condition," En Shukry continues. "She taught my wife how to wash my wounds and apply medicine. All my bedsores are healed now. If I feel any pain, she'd suggest I take my pain medication, for instance. Without her guidance, I wouldn't know what to do. As for myself, when she teaches, I listen and follow. That's why I hardly have to call her for any emergency."

It's been about 7 months since his referral to Hospis Malaysia. He can sleep better. He remembers the agony he felt in his stomach when he was bedridden. It was akin to it being pulled apart.

He confidently admits that he can basically live on his own now. So much so that his wife who used to take care of him 24/7 can now have a change of scene and go look after the grandchildren instead. His children will take him out with the grandchildren during the holidays too.

Lately, he's gone back to repairing things for friends and neighbours, though at a much slower pace. "I don't want to sit around too much and feel helpless. I need to exercise a bit too or else I'll be bored."

Today, En. Shukry is more than just a lucky man. He is a proud man too. And rightly so.



How Hospis Malaysia is supporting:

- Pain management
- Bedsore management
- Occupational therapy

