

Project Healing

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Project Type : Single Year

Area of concern:

According to the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) Website, Singapore has one of the highest rates of kidney failure in the world. Every 5 hours, one person is diagnosed with kidney failure. The rising trend is worrying due to two factors, an ageing population as well as increasing rates of obesity, diabetes and hypertension. In fact, Singapore is ranked 1st in the world for diabetes-induced kidney failure and ranks 4th in the world for prevalence of kidney failure. According to the National Kidney Foundation, as of 2018, there are roughly 7000 kidney dialysis patients. A kidney transplant is the best option for a patient's long-term survival. A patient on dialysis has a 61.3% chance of surviving five years and 36.5% chance of living for 10 years. However, when diagnosed with kidney failure, it takes an average Singaporean 15 years to find a suitable donor. In 2017, only 93 people underwent kidney transplant. Hence, most have to undergo dialysis 3 times a week in order to carry on with their lives.

Haemodialysis (a type of treatment) requires the patient to sit on a chair for at least 4 hours per session. One hand is needed for dialysis, meaning the things they can do during the session would be limited. Therefore, their time spent there would be more often than not, wasted.

Challenges faced:

The patients at the dialysis centre in Serangoon have very limited activities available to carry out during the sessions. Furthermore, as they do not know each other very well, this makes the dialysis sessions more dull and boring for them. Also, most of the patients are elderly and are unable to use technological devices to entertain themselves during the dialysis sessions.

Underlying Problem:

Given that kidney failure is becoming increasingly prevalent amongst Singaporeans and the dialysis sessions limit the activities they can do, how might we improve the well-being of the patients during their sessions by teaching them skills and keeping them engaged, as

well as foster bonds among the patients for peer support?

Plan of Action:

Our plan of action is detailed in the table below which also indicates the date of completion of each action. We kickstarted the project at the start of the year with a meeting with our National Kidney Foundation coordinator (Selena) to confirm the partnership and to finalise details and outline of upcoming plans and activities. We confirmed that our main objective will be to improve the wellbeing of the sessions by keeping them engaged and teaching them new skills, all while making them more bonded together. We then started off by going to the centres on a weekly basis and interacting with them, carrying out some interactive activities like Uno and Draw It!. We have also hosted an outing to Gardens by the Bay, as well as a cooking course.

Date	Action	Objective
2 March -27 July	Engagement sessions x17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Carried out activities with the patients such as playing Bingo or various card games ● Made conversation with the patients to help them pass time ● Taught some patients how to use their mobile phones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Occupy their time which will result in their boredom being alleviated. Passing time in an enjoyable manner will also help to make the dialysis more bearable and fun. ● Many of the elderly patients do not know how to properly use their phones. Hence, we can improve their knowledge and skills by teaching them more about technology.
10 June	Outing to Gardens by the Bay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brought patients inside the domes to see the flowers ● Played games such as scavenger hunts or quizzes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allow the patients to experience something new and refreshing ● Allow them to further interact with each other, further breaking the ice between them
3 August	Cooking course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Held by an external cooking instructor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equip the patients with a new skill

Project Outcome

Accomplishments:

Our questionnaire shows that 100% of the patients that we forged bonds with have enjoyed our weekly befriending sessions, and really liked the different activities we had carried out to entertain them. Also, the atmosphere of the centre was vastly different from what it was 5 months ago, whereas patients can be seen talking to each other across the beds in the centre. Furthermore, another survey that we had conducted showed that for the cooking course and the outing to Gardens by the Bay, around 90% of them answered that they immensely enjoyed the outings, and that these outings have allowed for greater interaction amongst themselves and brought them closer to other patients.

Also, here is a quote from our NKF coordinator. "Traditionally, patients at Serangoon Dialysis Centre are reserved and less receptive towards patient outings. When both events were highly received, we believe it is the combined effort of your team and the nurses in engaging and encouraging their participation. As patients' conditions vary drastically, attrition rate for outings are usually as high as 30-50%. Impressively, for both outings we managed to get 100% attendance!" Therefore, this shows that we were able to get the patients to enjoy the outings so much that they looked forward to even more events. Hence, our project was successful in making the patients enjoy themselves and improving their wellbeing, as well as improving the bonds between patients in order to foster more friendliness amongst them.

Reflections:

Through this entire project, our group has gained more empathy. During the sessions, while some patients were very excited to see us, some of the patients shunned us away and did not wish to speak to us. Although we were slightly annoyed, we eventually came to realise that these patients were very busy outside of the sessions as they were occupied with events like work. Hence, they would be very tired when they entered the centre. As such, our group began to gain empathy for the tough lives that they led. This has also allowed us to realise that before judging someone, we should take the initiative to understand the background of the people, rather than just immediately jumping to conclusions and forming a prejudice against their behaviors. Although empathy alone may be insufficient to improve one's life significantly, we propose that the community

step in to lend a helping hand to the unfortunate, such as kidney failure patients, so that their lives can be significantly improved.

Through this project, our group has also learnt that society needs to be more aware of Kidney Failure. Through our interactions with the beneficiaries for the past few months, we have learnt about their way of life and the different types of difficulties they face in their everyday life. They have many hardships, such as how a lot of their time is used up by dialysis sessions as well as the impacts of their impaired mobility. As such, we believe that more people should be aware of Kidney Failure in order to prevent themselves from having to go through such difficulties. However, their stories also opened our eyes to the ignorance shown by most of the public towards Kidney Failure with the lifestyles they are leading. This would mean that more and more Singaporeans are prone to Kidney Failure. While Singapore's government's campaign against diabetes is aiding the cause, we feel that there should be more spotlight shone towards Kidney Failure as a nationwide issue to be solved.