New Straits Times - 15 September 2006 After 30 years of dedicated service at the Kuala Lumpur Hospital, consultant nephrologist Datuk Dr Zaki Morad Mohd Zaher is clocking out for the last time today, but don&#65533;t expect kidney diseases to be far from his mind, writes ANNIE FREEDA CRUEZ. WHILE many people can&#65533;t wait to get out of a hospital, consultant nephrologist Datuk Dr Zaki Morad Mohd Zaher is reluctant to leave. Not after 30 years of calling the Kuala Lumpur Hospital his second home.

When we caught up with him a few days before his retirement, Dr Zaki&#65533;s office was in a mess as he packed his medical tomes, and stacked medical CDs into boxes.

It is not that he dreads the prospect of clocking out for the last time today, but his sadness stems from the fact that he can no longer serve his patients with the same dedication he had shown all these years.

Celebrating his 56th birthday on Monday, Dr Zaki has come a long way from the day he reported for duty. Then, he was one of only two specialists in the nephrology department. The other was (Tan Sri) Dr Abu Bakar Suleiman, who later became the director-general of Health.

Recalling the challenges of those early days, Dr Zaki, who has the distinction of being KLH&#65533;s longest-serving doctor, said: "It was a depressing period as there were only two of us, six dialysis machines and a handful of beds.

"Hundreds of kidney patients were referred to us from all over the country every year, and many had to go home disappointed because there were no available beds and not enough dialysis machines."

The dialysis machines, he said, were dinosaurs which required patients to sit for eight hours, unlike today&#65533;s machines which only need four hours to do the job.

"By the time the patients finished their sessions, they could hardly walk."

What a contrast to his current surroundings where there is now an entire institute dedicated to urology and nephrology, with state-of-the-art facilities, the latest diagnostic machines and a kidney transplant team.

There are now five consultant nephrologists, six specialists, seven medical officers and a team of well-trained allied healthcare staff.

"All major hospitals in the country are now well equipped to handle kidney patients, with many providing dialysis treatment," he said, adding that this was also available in remote parts of the country, including Sabah and Sarawak.

Despite the hardship of his early days at the Kuala Lumpur Hospital, Dr Zaki was never tempted to join his peers in private practice.

"More kidney patients come to government hospitals for treatment compared with private hospitals. I felt I could serve them better if I stayed on here ."

Born on Sept 18, 1950, Dr Zaki&#65533;s aptitude for learning was evident from his school days in Langkawi, where he completed his education at a younger age due to double promotions.

He was offered many scholarships, including one for engineering overseas, but he opted to further his studies in Malaysia.

He obtained his MBBS from Universiti Malaya in 1975.

Dr Zaki started his career at KLH in 1976. He did a brief stint at the Kangar Hospital, in Perlis, before returning to KLH, where he served in the nephrology unit with Dr Abu Bakar before joining the department of medicine for two years.

He was handpicked by Dr Abu Bakar to be a nephrologist, and sent for a two-year training stint in Britain.

Upon his return, at the age of 33, he was promoted to consultant nephrologist.

Three years later, in 1987, he was appointed the head of the department of nephrology.

During his tenure, Dr Zaki introduced special areas in nephrology, and developed critical care nephrology, interventional nephrology, glomerular disease and chronic kidney disease prevention &#65533; and widened the scope of transplants and dialysis.

He also spearheaded the initiative to improve the quality in dialysis by introducing haemodialysis standards.

Dr Zaki, who headed the Clinical Research Centre in the Health Ministry

from 1999, has produced a number of publications in collaboration with other researchers.

Asked about his vision, he said: "I want the government to take a proactive role in reducing kidney cases in the country by working together with primary care providers, as it's very expensive to treat kidney patients. There is a need for a national programme."

While he may no longer be actively involved in the treatment of patients at KLH, Dr Zaki has no intention of taking things easy.

He intends to take up an offer to lecture at the International Medical University.

Dr Zaki is currently the president-elect of the Asian Pacific Society of Nephrology, a member of the Education and Curriculum Advisory Committee, International Society of Nephrology (ISN), and chairman of the sub-committee for the Southeast Asia Commission for the Global Advancement of Nephrology of the ISN.

He is also the vice-chairman of the National Kidney Foundation. <table border="0" cellspacing="0" cellpadding="0" class="related"><tr><td colspan="2">
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