

Saving hearts, saving lives

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THE rising costs of health care services and health insurance premiums have become a growing burden for lower income families regardless of age groups, making it almost impossible for them to seek proper medical attention for major illnesses.

Underprivileged Malaysians with grave ailments like kidney and heart diseases especially will be able to access quality medical care at an affordable cost, thanks to MAA Medicare Charitable Foundation.

After two decades of providing highly-subsidised charitable dialysis treatment for thousands of needy kidney patients in Malaysia, the foundation is establishing the first Malaysian Charity Cardiac Diagnostic and Treatment Centre scheduled to open next month.

Led by consultant thoracic and cardiovascular surgeon Datuk Dr Ghandhiraj Somasundram, the centre is set to combat heart disease, stroke and premature sudden cardiac deaths by providing quality care and comprehensive cardiac and vascular services to its patients.

“Unfortunately, heart disease is the number one killer in our country; the tragedy is not just the loss of the patient who is usually the breadwinner of the family, but the entire family is also impacted,” said Dr Ghandhiraj, who is also the medical advisory committee chairman for MAA Medicare Heart Charity Fund.

“Cardiac treatment has become very costly over the years, mainly due to the inflation of the examinations and surgical fees. This makes it difficult and sometimes impossible for the lower social class to afford.”

Recognising the necessity to fill in the gap between the overly crowded government hospitals and costly private ones, Dr Ghandhiraj said, there has been a need to establish a centre to offer prompt diagnosis



Dr Ghandhiraj and dance participants hold a mock cheque for RM78,180 raised for the MMA Medicare Charitable Foundation.

and treatment for underprivileged patients with cardiac illnesses.

The Health Ministry has established several heart institutes and public hospitals across the country but that's still not sufficient to support all our community. “The patients either must wait four to eight months to receive treatment at government hospitals or bear the exorbitant cost for immediate attention at private health cares,” he said.

The centre, which will be manned by eight senior cardiologists, will provide on-time quality treatment at a highly subsidised rate, targeted at a fraction of the cost incurred at private hospitals. “We have subdivided the fees into four

categories. The first level is for those who need urgent medical attention and don't have any money or family to support them. This group of patients will be treated free of charge,” Dr Ghandhiraj said.

“For the rest, the maximum charges will be at 50 per cent of the private health care rates depending on their financial background.”

Being the first of its kind in Southeast Asian, the RM15 million centre will be equipped with modern cardiology equipment such as a multi-slice CT scanner, X-Ray machines, cardio angiogram/angioplasty equipment and other facilities as well as high dependency beds to look after the patients.

The foundation recently organised a pulse pounding dance workout titled “Dance Your Heart Out: Sweat2Smiles 2017” and raised over RM78,000 to assist in the setting up of the centre, to be located on the fourth and fifth floor of Wisma MAA Medicare in Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah.

Hosted by Jazzercise Malaysia, more than 400 participants — the majority of whom were women and children — took part in the beat-pumping jazz dance, strength training as well as stretch movements exercise at Tropicana Golf and Country Resort.

Call 03-4044 4468 or email fundraising@maamedicare.org for details or donations.