

Need for health checks

BEING told you have a critical illness is devastating but there are approaches you can take in order to alleviate fear and anxiety.

Dealing with diagnosis

"It was supposed to have been a simple operation to remove a cyst but when my doctor sat me down, I knew there was more to it," shared resident medical officer at Columbia Asia Hospital-Puchong Dr Aiza Abu Bakar.

"And I was right – the cyst turned out to be precancerous."

Dr Aiza is now cancer-free but recognises the irony.

"How my doctor must've felt when he told me the news is how I feel every time I give bad news to patients and their families."

She remembered how her father cried when first told of the diagnosis.

"Of course emotions run high," said Dr Aiza. "This is when you find out who your loved ones really are; who will rally around you with physical, emotional and spiritual support."

On top of support from family and friends, Dr Aiza stressed the need for patients to be empowered with knowledge about their critical illness.

"Please don't trust online

information or social media: Most times, these are not backed up by evidence and can cause more emotional damage."

Another reaction to diagnosis is to seek traditional healing first instead of modern medicine.

For example, there are first-stage cancers that can be cured with surgery but some patients prefer seeing a *bomoh*, a traditional healer.

By the time the cancer spreads, it is already too late to resort to modern treatments.

"My advice is – don't wait for bad news," she said.

"It is extremely important to go for regular screenings that can detect critical illnesses.

"The earlier you find out, the earlier you can respond.

"That response can potentially save your life."

To make a health screening appointment, call Columbia Asia Hospital-Puchong at 03-8064 8688.

Health screenings: Reason for urgency

There must be something about health screenings that is as necessary as a wake-up call, for this topic to be raised repeatedly by Columbia Asia Hospitals.

Chief medical officer at Columbia Asia Hospital-Bukit Rimau Dr Ng



Health screenings are becoming a necessity nowadays. (Inset) Dr Ng says that in relation to critical illnesses, regular checks are necessary to prevent and to detect.

Lee Li asks rhetorically: "What's the big deal with health screenings?"

"In relation to critical illnesses, there are two reasons: one, to prevent; and two, to detect."

Dr Ng is the gatekeeper for health screenings at her hospital.

For first-timers, she recommends a basic profile, but for those who confide in her about their habits and lifestyles, she may omit or add tests.

"Health screenings are not 'one-size-fits-all'.

"The tests you need depend on a

lot of factors: age, gender, family history of a disease, and most importantly, your lifestyle."

"Are you living a stressful life? Getting enough sleep? Do you smoke or drink? What about exercises? Some of these answers determine if you are in high risk groups of certain diseases."

Dr Ng notes that even the Malaysian lifestyle can imply the kinds of tests one needs.

"A lifetime addiction of *roti canai* and *teh tarik* can put you at risk of heart diseases and diabetes."

"Some people say, 'what you don't know can't hurt you'.

"They find screenings intimidating and have fear of being told that something is wrong with their health," said Dr Ng.

"Actually, if there is something wrong, then you need to know what it is, and you need to know now."

■ To get a health screening appointment, call Columbia Asia Hospital-Bukit Rimau at 03-5125 9999.