

## **Thalassaemia Workshop for Nurses & Health Personnels by Dr Yeoh Soh Leng**

The Thalassaemia Workshop for Nurses & Health Personnels was held successfully on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2006, at Dewan Sinaran Ilmu, Penang Hospital. A total number of 100 participants attended the workshop. They are doctors, nurses and medical laboratory technicians from seven hospitals and one health clinic in Penang.

The workshop started at 8.15am with welcoming notes given by Dr Revathy Nallusamy, Head of Paediatric Department, Penang Hospital. She also gave an overview on Thalassaemia which touched on the carrier rate of Thalassaemia in Malaysia and the overall wholesome management of thalassaemia. The advisor of Penang Thalassaemia Society, Mdm Khoo SW emceed the workshop and introduced the speakers.

Dr Goh AS, Consultant Haematologist from Penang Hospital gave the second lecture on Blood Transfusion which touched on indications for transfusion in Thalassaemia major and intermedia. The optimal transfusion regime and various complications of blood transfusion were also discussed in detail. The importance of using the blood filter was emphasized.

The third lecture was on Chelation therapy, given by Dr Yeoh SL, Paediatric Haematologist Oncologist from Penang Hospital. The properties of different types of iron chelators were discussed, including the advantages and side effects. Various regimes using the chelators were further elaborated.

Dr Tan Ru San, Consultant Cardiologist from Singapore Heart Center, Singapore General Hospital enlightened the crowd on using T2\* to Monitor Iron Load. He explained about the different methods that are available in measuring iron load in the body with the shortfall of each method. Basic of MRI T2\* and details on how iron load in the heart and liver is assessed by this method were discussed. Dr Tan also ensured the crowd that iron overload in the heart is reversible, thus patients and their carers should not give up hope.

The lecture on Complications in Thalassaemia was delivered by Dr Yeoh SL. Areas covered include complications from iron overload and the participants were reminded that the major cause of death in thalassaemia patients was due to cardiac failure. Psychological and social aspects of care were not left out as well.

After tea-break, which consisted of sumptuous local delicacies, the workshop resumed with Ms Emma Prescott, Thalassaemia Nurse Specialist from Whittington Hospital, London, UK, who gave an extensive talk on Nurse's Role & Monitoring. She elaborated on how the help and encouragement, both medically and socially, that a thalassaemia nurse offer can change a patient's life. Her inspiring talk gave the medical personnel a brand new view on their role in the management of thalassaemia patients.

Dr Pyar Kaur, a very senior consultant paediatrician, and one of the pioneers in Penang Thalassaemia Society drew the participants' attention on Prevention and Screening in Thalassaemia. She explained about the screening tests and how to interpret them accurately. The importance of an effective prevention program were discussed as well.

The topic on Reducing Myocardial Iron was given by Dr Yeo TW from Pharmaforte. This was followed by a video show on how deferiprone work and improved survival among Thalassaemia patients with cardiac complications. The video show successfully draw full attention of the participants.

Lunch break with delicious Malaysia cuisine was between 1pm -2pm. A video show on the pilot screening project for Thalassaemia was played. This further enhanced the participants understanding about Thalassaemia and the importance of screening program.

Working Towards A Better Tomorrow, was the second lecture by Ms Emma Prescott. She had no problems convincing the participants that with optimal care, Thalassaemia patients will be able to have high achievement in their careers and establish their own family.

Dr Peter Lim from Novartis talked on Improving Chelation Compliance. He touched on various reasons for poor compliance and the different aspects that may help to enhance patient's compliance.

Janice Kua, who has Thalassaemia Major and who is very successful academically and lives an active social life, gave a very lively talk on Life as a Thalassaemia. The participants were touched by her commitment to take care of herself well and gave her a big round of applause.

BMT Case Experience was sharing of experience by Mdm Teoh SL, whose daughter underwent a successful allogenic bone marrow transplant. She shared unselfishly about the obstacle, difficult and sweet moments that she went through without regrets.

A practical session on blood filters and infusion pump for desferrioxamine was conducted by SN Saw and SN Khatijah. The participants had their doubts cleared about proper handling of the above equipments.

The workshop ended at 445pm with handing of certificates to the speakers by the President of Penang Thalassaemia Society, Mr Ng CH. Dr Pyar represented the Head of Paediatric Department, Penang Hospital to give the certificates to representatives from the various hospitals.

Feedback via questionnaire was obtained from 74 of the 100 participants.95% of them felt that the workshop had fulfilled the objective.96% of the respondents thought they had benefited from the course , the duration of the workshop was adequate and the topics were well covered.96% felt that the workshop should be run on a regular basis.



Participants listening attentively.....



Speakers - Emma, Dr. Tan , Dr. Pyar and Dr. Goh



Jasmine, aged 5 yrs. who has successfully underwent a successful allogenic bone marrow transplant .



Demonstrating how to use blood filter.....