

All I want is to wake up the next day

By HCA Hospice Care Community Relations Team • Photos by Bob Lee
HCA Hospice Care

Cheerfully waving and greeting the staff, Uncle Abdul Latip is clearly a regular at Singapore General Hospital. He supplies useful nuggets of information as we walk down the hallway – the nearest toilet, best place to wait for a taxi, where to take the shuttle bus.

"I used to be terrified of going to the hospital. I needed someone to accompany me, even when I was bringing someone else to the hospital! *Kan cheong* or not, you ask me?"

Now, however, Uncle Latip, a patient attending HCA Hospice Care's day hospice centre, has become all too familiar with the hospital.

He was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in 2011. Multiple myeloma begins as a cancer of the plasma cells in the bone marrow. These malignant cells then move to the bone, forming multiple tumours.

"In the beginning, I thought, 'Why is this happening to me?'"

"Then I told myself – the cancer is in my blood, circulating around my body. So when I think of it this way, I wonder, should I feel sad? It's already there. It's not like a washing machine where you can clean your clothes, dry it out, and it will dry. So you have to accept it.

"I believe God never punishes; God always does good things. I thought, okay, this is God's will – so I try to take it easy, try to be positive and take it day by day."

Uncle Latip went through surgery to replace his entire spinal vertebra with metal implants. He candidly pulls his shirt up, giving us permission to take a shot of this surgical wonder.

After his operation, Uncle Latip's back still hurts, especially on cold days. Sometimes, standing up after sitting for a while takes effort because of stiffness. But he has been able to handle regular day-to-day activities, such as taking public transport to his medical appointments, and has even been making day trips to Johor Bahru with his wife.

Uncle Latip has been a cheery attendee at our day hospice. "In the beginning, yes, I didn't like going there, because I thought – all the sick people around. Then I told myself, we are all in the same boat. We spend our time there talking and joking with each other. The time spent there goes much faster than that spent at home."

When he was diagnosed, the doctor gave him a prognosis of about two years or so. And it has been more than three-and-a-half years now since his diagnosis.

"I was scared of death, and was not prepared yet. So I asked God to give me a chance, to give me time to do whatever I want to do,

About HCA Hospice Care

HCA Hospice Care, Singapore's largest home hospice provider, currently runs two day hospice centres for patients with life-limiting illness. For a nominal, means-tested fee of \$15, patients are provided return transport, meals, and therapeutic activities to maintain an active lifestyle. Find out more at www.hca.org.sg

to do good things. At home, I can pray five times a day, instead of thinking of working, working, and working.

"Some people have to sit down on the stool when they pray. I thank God that I still can kneel when I pray to Him."

We ask Uncle Latip for a few words to share with other patients.

"I would cry in the beginning, thinking about what would happen to me. All I want now is to die with my family around me. If you give me \$100,000, what can I do? You want to *makan*? How much can you *makan*?"

"All I want now is to be able to wake up the next day and then enjoy it to the fullest!" ❤️

