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# **PRESCRIPTION**

Latest news and updates from the Faculty of Pharmacy, Universiti Teknologi MARA

## **EMPOWERING HEALTH LITERACY IN DIALYSIS CARE:**

### **BRIDGING THE GAP WITH PATIENT-ORIENTED EDUCATION**

By: Dr. Norkasih Ibrahim

Living with end-stage kidney disease (ESKD) and undergoing haemodialysis is a lifelong journey requiring discipline, understanding, and active participation in care. For many patients, navigating complex medication regimens, strict dietary restrictions, and multiple comorbidities can be overwhelming. Without adequate health literacy, these challenges often translate into missed dialysis sessions, poor adherence to treatment, frequent hospital visits, and diminished quality of life.

My professional passion lies in empowering patients to take ownership of their health through accessible, practical, and culturally relevant education.

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Health literacy is a vital determinant of treatment success. Nevertheless, in Malaysia, research suggests that dialysis patients' health literacy levels may be lower than in developed countries, leaving them vulnerable to preventable complications.

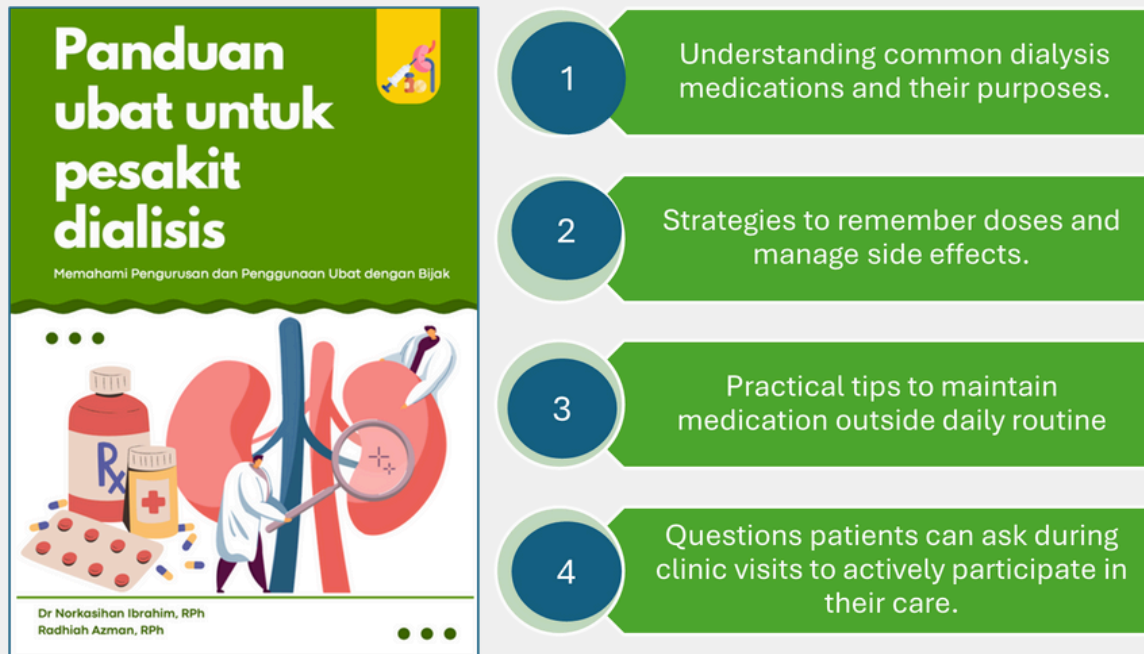
Recognizing this gap, I have devoted much of my recent work to developing patient-oriented educational materials that simplify complex medical information into actionable guidance. These materials are not merely information leaflets—they are tools for empowerment, designed to foster better communication between patients and healthcare providers and encourage shared decision-making. By integrating a structured education program with **innovative delivery methods such as telemedicine**, we can extend the reach of personalized education beyond dialysis centers. In dialysis care, information is more than data—it is a lifeline. When patients truly understand their treatment, they gain the power to protect and improve their well-being. That, to me, is the heart of healthcare.

This vision took a significant step forward through the **Health Literacy and Health Outcomes in Haemodialysis (H.E.R.O.E.S) Project**, a collaborative initiative between Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and the Orion Consortium Sdn. Bhd. (OCSB). The project was driven by a community research grant from OCSB for a shared goal: to equip dialysis patients with essential knowledge and skills in medication management and renal nutrition, ultimately improving their quality of life.

In partnership with OCSB and technical support from Rhazes Telehealth Sdn. Bhd., we conducted an **interactive patient-centered education** event at the OC Dialysis Centre in Masjid Tanah, Melaka. This workshop brought together patients, nurses, and a multidisciplinary team of healthcare professionals, creating a dynamic environment for learning and discussion. One of the proudest outcomes of the H.E.R.O.E.S project is the development of a **patient-centred education booklet for dialysis patients**. This booklet, which forms part of a Master's research project undertaken by Radhiah Azman, grounded in both clinical evidence and patient feedback, offers clear, visually engaging, and culturally tailored information on topics (Figure). Unlike generic educational handouts, this booklet reflects the lived realities of Malaysian dialysis patients, incorporating their language preferences, cultural food practices, and common concerns. The development process included patient reviews to ensure that content was understandable, relevant, and engaging—a true example of co-created health education.



In dialysis care, information is more than data—it is a lifeline. When patients truly understand their treatment, they gain the power to protect and improve their well-being. That philosophy remains at the core of Dr. Norkasih Ibrahim's ongoing efforts to bridge the gap in health literacy and create equitable access to high-quality renal care.



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## About the Author

Dr. Norkasih Ibrahim is a Principal Lecturer at the Department of Pharmacy Practice and Clinical Pharmacy, Faculty of Pharmacy, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). She obtained her PhD in Clinical Pharmacy (Renal & Medication Safety) from University College London in 2014. Dr. Norkasih has extensive professional experience as a renal clinical pharmacist, having served at Hospital Kuala Lumpur and Hospital Selayang before joining UiTM in 2020. Her expertise lies in nephrology, renal transplantation, and medication safety, areas in which she has contributed to national guidelines and clinical practice. An active researcher, Dr. Norkasih has led and collaborated on multiple studies focusing on drug-related problems, chronic kidney disease, immunosuppressive therapy, and medication adherence. She is also involved in consultancy and international academic collaborations, as well as reviewing for several scholarly journals. With her strong background in clinical practice, teaching, and research, she continues to play a pivotal role in advancing pharmacy education and healthcare policy in Malaysia.