Hospital gives back to the community

MELISSA PAPIER

A PRIVATE hospital group has come to the rescue of an Eastridge resident by performing a life-saving operation – at no cost.

Shaheed Abrahams (28), an unemployed father of two, was handed a lifeline when surgeons at Melomed Hospital Group Holdings performed a vascular access operation on him at no charge. The operation would have cost Shaheed R15 000.

Shaheed, who was diagnosed with end-stage kidney failure a year ago, needed the operation to allow him to receive dialysis treatment, a life support replacement therapy that removes excess water and toxins from the body – a normal function of the kidneys.

Chatting to *People's Post* while having his dialysis last week, Shaheed said he had not realised the seriousness of his condition until it was too late.

"I was told by the doctors at Groote Schuur Hospital that there was no place on their programme for me," says Shaheed.

Zulfah, his mother, says she could not sit back and do nothing while her son suffered, so she decided to approach the private sector.

"I met Dr Craig Arendse at Melomed Hospital and explained my son's condition and the predicament we faced," says Zulfah.

Arendse apparently presented the merits of the case to the hospital board, which decided to go ahead with the operation, free of charge.

Previous operations, done for the same reason, had failed, and the family could no longer afford to cover the medical costs.

Now that Shaheed has had the operation, he receives dialysis three times a week – and each session costs R850. Fortunately for the family, the burden of paying for this has been taken up by a sponsor in Johannesburg, who has offered to pay for Shaheed's dialysis for the entire year.

The sponsor has chosen to remain anonymous.

"By the grace of God and with the support of the family, Shaheed has made it this far," said Zulfah.

Shaheed, who is in plaster, told *People's Post* that his illness had taken a major toll on his life.

"I have no social life and I am constantly tired. I have to depend on my family for help. I am glad to be alive, and want to build up strength and just do simple things for myself."

Fazel Oosterwyk, hospital manager of Melomed Mitchell's Plain, says the operation was done based on the merits it presented.

"For the Melomed Hospital Group, it's not just about the unit, or about the quality of services; to us, it's about meeting the community halfway and finding ways of giving back to the people."

Abrahams thanks Dr Arendse and the Melomed Hospital Group for their understanding and compassion, as well as the sponsor who has taken up the cost of his dialysis treatment.

The next stage in Abrahams' treatment is to have a kidney transplant.

For further information about the services offered at the group's renal care unit, call (021) 392-3543.

LIFE SAVING: Supporting Shaheed Abrahams (centre) during his dialysis treatment are, from left: Malvina Mulligan (nursing services manager), Zulfah Abrahams (Shaheed's mother) and Fazel Oosterwyk (hospital manager). Photo: Melissa Papier

TEAM EFFORT: Shaheed Abrahams (centre) is seen with the team who helped him through his successful operation. From left: Linde du Toit (nursing services manager), Elizma Loubser (surgical unit manager), Dr Craig Arendse (nephrologist) and Theresa Adams (emergency unit manager). Photo: Randal Pedro