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A VICTIM WHO WON'T GIVE UP

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focus 15



A victim who won't give up

SOO KIAN FATT was 12 when he overheard the doctor telling his parents that he would die at the age of 21.

"But I don't think that is true. I am 21 now and am much stronger than I was a few years ago," said Kian Fatt, who suffers from Duchenne's muscular dystrophy.

The disorder was diagnosed when he was eight, and by the age of 14, he was confined to a wheelchair.

Recalling his childhood, Kian Fatt said he now understood why he used to be so clumsy.

"When I ran, my legs felt wobbly. I was always falling and bumping into things," he said.

Kian Fatt is very dependent and can only use his hands for light, non-strenuous tasks. Although he can feed himself, he needs to be carried to bed and is helped when in the bathroom or toilet.

"It was very difficult when I was staying at home. My sisters had to be there all the time to help me. They sometimes got angry and would scold me," he said.

He joined the Selangor Cheshire Home three years ago.

At the home, together with two other inmates suffering from the same disorder, he undergoes light physiotherapy and also hydrotherapy.

Kian Fatt is one victim of muscular dystrophy who refuses to succumb. When he joined the home, he was very shy.

Since then, he has accepted his ailment and talks openly about it. He plays the organ and piano and also draws a lot.

The mental attitude of muscular dystrophy victims is very important. Most victims tend to lose interest and motivation in attending physiotherapy sessions.

This happens when they get less mobile. Others choose to see only the futility of the therapy — and would ultimately succumb to the disorder.

But physiotherapist Balwant Singh Bains said: "Knowing that their condition will worsen and that they will be disabled are not reasons for them to give up.

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— Physiotherapist Balwant Singh Bains

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He added that mental therapy was of utmost importance, to avoid patients from going into depression.

"I have seen cases with terrible psychological consequences ... some even to the point of insanity."

"Sometimes, it is the psychological aspect that kills," he said.

Associate Prof Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Abdul Kadir, who heads the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Orthopaedic Department, said the final outcome was unpredictable, and that child victims usually do not live beyond the age of 10.

But physiotherapist Balwant Singh Bains has seen patients who lived until the age of 25.