

4 August 2016

A story from the heart

Norman Tuimaseve went from being overweight and working 17 hour days to living a completely changed lifestyle motivating cardiac patients in Liverpool Hospital while working to keep himself alive.

Weighing 160kg, the 39 year old was diagnosed with end stage dilated cardiomyopathy in 2012. Already suffering from restricted breathing and swelling in his legs, Norman struggled to leave the house without worrying about what could happen to him.

“80 percent of my life I have been overweight and I only realised the severity of the situation when I was admitted to the hospital after an electrocardiogram (ECG) picked up that my resting heart rate was through the roof,” he said.

After discovering he was ineligible for an organ transplant, Norman committed to a total lifestyle change through guidance from his treating cardiologist at Liverpool Hospital, Dr Christian Mussap, Cardiac Ambulatory Services nurse Stephanie Irwin and GP David Huynh.

“I decided to lose weight because my health was really bad and I knew that I had to make some serious changes to my lifestyle, not only to improve my condition but also to lengthen the time I have left with my wife Amenah and our children,” Mr Tuimaseve said.

While the cause of his condition is largely unknown, the impact of his weight on his mental and physical health saw Norman lose 60 kilos.

“I stuck to a strict regime cutting out all cholesterol and sugars, limited my water intake to one litre a day and ate plenty of green vegetables. In one year, my weight dropped to 100kg and I now encourage other people with heart disease to use me as their motivation to make positive changes in their lifestyle choices,” he said.

Heartened by the impact of the changes he had made, Dr Mussap said it is continually inspiring to see Norman carry out his goal of helping others.

“It is really inspiring to see Norman improving his function through the right balance of dieting, exercise and rest,” Dr Mussap said.

“Norman has been treated at Liverpool Hospital from the initial stages of his diagnosis, right through to our outpatient clinic but our goal has remained the same - to facilitate high calibre continuous, convenient and affordable care under the one roof for him and others like him.”

“Dilated cardiomyopathy is a condition in which the heart becomes weakened. As a result, the heart cannot pump enough blood to the rest of the body.” he said.

Cardiac Ambulatory Services nurse Stephanie Irwin who also cares for Norman said his approach to life has prolonged his chances of short term survival and reduced his chances of

immediate morbidity.

“Norman attends the RACE program at Liverpool Hospital (recovery after a cardiac event) to keep himself fit but also to be an inspiration to other patients who are in a similar position to what he was in 2012,” Ms Irwin said.

“He is very keen to show people of all ages that just because you have end stage heart disease, it doesn’t mean you can’t improve your quality of life, and if you’re not end stage then you can do something to prevent getting there.” she said.