

Parkinson's patients need all the support they can get.

Coming to terms with Parkinson's

WHAT would you do if you suddenly discovered that a loved one has been living with a serious medical condition for nearly a decade? And all that while you and most of your family members were blissfully unaware of what was going on?

This was the nightmarish situation that Siti Khalijah Isa, 56, faced three years ago when she found out that her husband Abdul Majid Abdul Rahman, 60, had Parkinson's disease. Parkinson's is a progressive disease of the nervous system marked by tremors and muscle rigidity.

The person who broke the bad news to Khalijah was Majid's doctor. Majid had a vague understanding that something was wrong with him from as early as 2002. But Majid, an army retiree, did not want news of his health condition to affect his family. He thought that what his family didn't know wouldn't hurt them.

Majid continued to live his life as normally as he could. He helped with house chores, and drove his wife and children to and from school. Khalijah was a senior assistant principal in a secondary school in Kuala Lumpur at that time before she became headmistress.

The heavy responsibilities of work kept the headmistress occupied most of the time. However, relatives and friends began to notice the tell-tale signs of Parkinson's in Majid.

Majid began to have trouble walking. Then his body became weaker, especially on his left side. People started noticing that when



Khalijah or the rest of the family. In fact, Majid did a good job of hiding everything from them.

Whenever he went to see the doctor, he would make sure that he was alone. Either he would drive to his appointment on his own or insist on being dropped off and picked up later.

But soon it became impossible to keep his condition a secret. His worsening physical symptoms forced him to go for a thorough medical check-up. Majid was diagnosed with Parkinson's.

By then Khalijah knew her husband was on some form of medication. However, she decided to give Majid more time until he was ready to talk about it. Then, one day, Majid asked his wife to accompany him to the hospital.

Today, both Khalijah and Majid are very much aware of Parkinson's and what needs to be done to tackle it.

Majid now has a wheelchair on standby for those times when he experiences sudden weakness and "freezing moments" when he is unable to move his body.



Supportive spouse: Siti Khalijah Isa is glad that she has more time to spend with hubby Abdul Majid Abdul Rahman since retiring in January.

our maid pushes his wheelchair next to him. When he experiences a freezing episode, the chair is ready by his side to prevent him from falling. The neighbours also chip in by pushing him home in his wheelchair."

Since Khalijah retired in January this year, she has been able to spend more time with her husband.

She is also very encouraged by the support she gets from the public when they attend any function.

"People are always willing

to help by offering to carry his wheelchair out of the car or simply encouraging us on," says Khalijah.

Majid is exempted from fasting during Ramadan. This is because he has to take six types of medication, nine times a day for his condition. The dosages start from 7am to 9pm. Some of the tablets have to be taken before food, and others after meals.

Majid and Khalijah take everything in their stride and make it a point to live as normally as possible. They attend breaking fast events and Friday prayers in the mosque.

Then there's the weekly self-help sessions at the Malaysian Parkinson's Disease Association centre in Kuala Lumpur where the couple get all the motivation they need to continue their fight against a most insidious disease.

■ To find out more about the Malaysian Parkinson's Disease Association, please call 03-7980 6685 (Tuesday to Saturday).

**"It's not fun anymore!
I could always play
games with Abang...
I really miss him"**

