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Let's pay more attention to our hearts

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TWELVE days at the National Heart Institute gave Manap a new lease on life. Fifty this year, Manap is a colleague at the Taiping office. I've met him a couple of times before but this time an encounter with him has renewed an interest which has been neglected for almost a year. And I'm very sure that thousands of others have also neglected this aspect of their daily lives.

Manap went through a major heart bypass operation in November last year. Like an angler who came back from a fishing trip and who let a big patin get away, Manap was quick to show us the scar on his calf and thigh where the veins were taken to replace the clogged ones near his heart.

Before that, he eagerly showed his audience the X-ray films just before the surgery. He kept the films in his drawer in the office. I suspect that he would take the films out at every opportunity to show his friends and colleagues. In a way, it should help others to re-think their priorities in life - position and wealth? Money and health?

I also know several other colleagues who went through similar surgeries in recent months and years. It's enough to make all of us realise that we should pay attention to our hearts. If we don't, we could be in deep trouble. Manap is the latest example of fine medical work, one which gave him his life back.

Anyone talking to him should start thinking about renewing their commitment to life, which means starting all over again in the case of some people. Others have done it before, and we can all certainly do the same. With discipline and some effective time management, we can look after ourselves fairly well, I'm sure.

Manap has eight children and that is enough reason to stay alive and healthy. Very often, some of us do not give enough attention to our health and end up on the hospital bed or surgery table. Manap has certainly jolted me into trying to change my life, to try to reschedule routines to accommodate some aerobic exercise.

I asked Manap what were the symptoms which led him to finally seek medical attention. He had problems climbing stairs. Walking up the stairs to the first floor of his two-storey office building, Manap had to stop a few times to catch his breath. He said he even had breathing problems when he answered the call of nature.

Manap himself knew the reasons why he ended up on the surgeon's table - almost no exercise, a laid-back lifestyle, and smoking. He has stopped smoking now. Smoking is easy to pick up, but never easy to ditch. Take it from me. A few other chaps can also testify to this.

After spending 12 days at the institute, and treated by the same surgeon who performed a similar operation on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad 12 years ago, Manap returned home. It was painful, he said, and I could feel my knees weakening as he described what he went through.

Manap went home to recuperate and was told by the doctors to change his lifestyle and watch his diet. One of the first things he did was to get rid of his cigarettes. He's not saying that cigarettes caused the bypass, but he felt that too much smoking and no exercise added to life's stress, of which there are plenty.

He also went home with several reminders from the good doctors - no strenuous exercises, and no driving cars or riding motorcycles for the time being. He adhered to these very well and only started riding the

motorcycle recently. He stays about 10km from his office, and used the bike to get there.

I left Manap at his office. Taiping is a beautiful town, with its own character and personality. The town's Lake Gardens has gained a reputation of being one of the finest, with well-maintained plants and walkways.

If Manap can divide his time well, and follow a strict exercise routine, besides eating wisely, his "new heart" can serve him well in the coming years.

Good luck Manap!

(END)