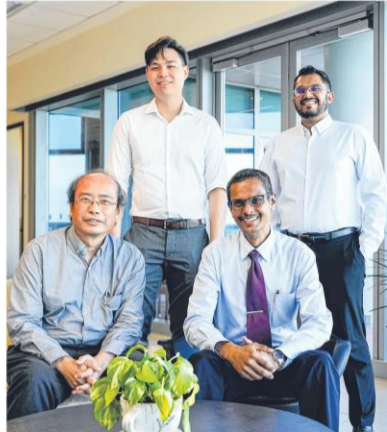


Surgery reunites man with family after brain tumour tore them apart



Above: The National University Hospital team (clockwise from left) comprising Associate Professor Yeo Tseng, Dr Rambert Wee Guan Mou and Dr Nivedh Dinesh, with Mr Sadayan Ahmed Maideen Jabbar. Well-known victims of glioblastoma, an incurable cancer which Mr Sadayan has, include US President Joe Biden's son, Mr Beau Biden, who died at the age of 46 in 2015, two years after his diagnosis.

Right: Mr Sadayan Ahmed Maideen Jabbar celebrating his birthday with the nurses in his NUH care team after his surgery. PHOTOS: NUHS, COURTESY OF SADAYAN AHMED MAIDEEN JABBAR



Mild-mannered man had turned abusive due to incurable brain cancer and it led to divorce

Aditi Bharade

Mr Sadayan Ahmed Maideen Jabbar, 48, had been happily married for 15 years when he suddenly started lashing out verbally and physically at his wife and four children in 2020.

The usually mild-mannered and even-tempered product manager thought his sudden change in temperament was due to stress brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, when he started working from home.

Unable to deal with the strain of the abuse and his frequent temper outbursts, his wife, who does not wish to be named, divorced him in June 2020 and left with their children.

In June 2021, the divorcee, who lived alone, was feeding his cats when he suffered his first of a series of epileptic seizures. These were accompanied by headaches and a metallic taste in his mouth. The seizures, which he described as "white-outs" of his vision for about 20 seconds each time, persisted for two weeks.

After scans of his heart and lungs yielded nothing abnormal, doctors at the National University Hospital (NUH) scanned his brain and found a 3cm cancerous tumour in his temporal lobe.

In a media interview on Tuesday, Mr Sadayan's doctor told The Straits Times that the brain cancer, called glioblastoma, had affected his amygdala, a part of the brain linked to emotions such as anger and fear and the control of aggression.

The incurable cancer, which affects approximately three in 100,000 people in Singapore, had lowered Mr Sadayan's inhibitions and caused him to "act almost like an animal", said Associate Professor Yeo Tseng Tsai, the head of NUH's division of neurosurgery.

"Glioblastoma is the most malignant brain cancer, and the median survival duration is only 18 to 24 months," Prof Yeo said.

The rapid-growing tumour rarely shows symptoms until at a late stage.

Well-known victims of glioblastoma included US President Joe Biden's son, Mr Beau Biden, who died at the age of 46 in 2015, two years after his diagnosis.

The news of the diagnosis hit Mr Sadayan hard. He said his mental health deteriorated as he read up on his condition on the Internet.

"You search glioblastoma, and all the information essentially tells you to give up on life because you are going to die. That affected me a lot," he said.

But he decided to put his faith in Prof Yeo, who was his lead surgeon, rather than dwell on the in-

formation online.

Mr Sadayan had two operations in NUH last July to remove the tumour and has been going for chemotherapy since.

He said he saw an immediate change in his behaviour post-surgery. He was no longer the angry man he had been before.

He soon realised that his abusive behaviour towards his wife and children was a result of the tumour wreaking havoc in his brain.

While he was grateful for his successful surgery, he missed his family.

"I was a happy man in the day and a very sad and lonely man at night. After surgery, I thought: Why did I divorce my wife?" he said.

Initially hesitant to inform his former wife and children of his condition, he eventually shared the news with them.

The move turned his former wife around. She drove him to chemotherapy and took care of him. They reconnected and decided to remarry in April this year. The family is now living under one roof again.

"I am happy that I got a second chance. How many people post-divorce get back with the same spouse?" Mr Sadayan said with a laugh.

Prof Yeo said patients in his field often have bleak stories, so Mr Sadayan's story was a refreshing one.

"You always hear sad stories, so it is nice to hear a happy story for once."

Although Mr Sadayan's condition is stable, Prof Yeo said the cancer will resurface at some point, be it months or years from now.

It is rare for glioblastoma pa-

tients to survive past 24 months.

According to the American Cancer Society, only 9 per cent of glioblastoma patients in the age group of 45 to 54 survive for more than five years.

Despite this, Mr Sadayan maintains an optimistic outlook on life. He does not make plans for the future, such as booking vacations,

and focuses only on the present.

His days now consist of working from home and spending time with his family. After work, he unwinds, tucks his children in bed and says a prayer.

"I am taking it one day at a time," he said.

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